CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 36: William Carey: 19th c. Missionary to India

William Carey: Did You Know?

Little-known or remarkable facts about William Carey

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William Carey translated the complete Bible into 6 languages, and portions into 29 others, yet he never attended the equivalent of high school or college. His work was so impressive, that in 1807, Brown University conferred a Doctor of Divinity degree on him.

William Carey is often called the Father of Modern Protestant Missions. But the first European Protestant missionaries to Asia arrived almost a century before he did. By the time Carey established his mission community, there were thousands of Christians in a Pietist-led settlement in southern India.

William Carey's ministry sparked a new era in missions. One historian notes that his work is "a turning-point; it marks the entry of the English-speaking world on a large scale into the missionary enterprise—and it has been the English-speaking world which has provided four-fifths of the [Protestant] missionaries from the days of Carey until the present time."

Due to an illness, Carey lost most of his hair in his early twenties. He wore a wig for about ten more years in England, but on his way to India, he reportedly threw his wig in the ocean and never wore one again.

This famous phrase is the best-known saying of William Carey, yet Carey never said it this way. In a sermon he declared, "Expect great things! Attempt great things!" The phrases "from God" and "for God" were added by others because the sermon's context implied God's role.

Carey was married three times, and he baptized all three of his wives.

At age 12, Carey taught himself Latin. Later, also on his own, he mastered Greek, Hebrew, French, and Dutch. During his life he learned literally dozens of languages and dialects.

Carey was a social-political radical. Unlike most of his British countrymen, he was sympathetic to the American colonists during the American War of Independence. He also boycotted sugar from the West Indies because he so intensely opposed to slavery.

It was illegal for Carey's father to hear his son preach. In 1719 Parliament prohibited anyone attending a meeting of "Dissenters" (which a Baptist like Carey was) from teaching. Carey's father was a schoolmaster, so he didn't hear his son preach for some time. When he finally did come, he crept in the church and sat at the back.

Though William Carey preached one of the most influential sermons of all time ("Expect great things! Attempt great things!"), he failed in his first bid to become ordained. The reason: his preaching was boring. It took two years before the ordination committee was satisfied with his preaching.

When Carey entered India, he was an illegal alien. Any European wishing to live in British India needed a license from the East India Company, which refused to grant licenses for missionary work. It felt that

"interfering in the religious opinions of the natives" might cause a backlash among Indians and hurt business. It wasn't until 20 years later, by act of Parliament, that missionaries could get such licenses.

Carey never took a furlough from missionary service. He lived and worked in India for nearly 41 years.

William Carey helped to found Serampore College, the first Christian college in Asia. It continues today.

Carey's written English was poor, both in spelling and punctuation. His chief supporter once wrote to him, "I never knew a person of so much knowledge as you profess in other languages write English so bad."

Carey and the Serampore mission team developed the first Bengali Bible and the first Bengali newspaper. Carey and his colleagues essentially laid the foundation for modern Bengali literature. As one linguist put it, they raised Bengali "from its debased condition of an unsettled dialect to the character of a regular and permanent form of speech," capable of becoming "a vehicle of a great literature."

Carey proposed a world missionary conference—an idea 100 years ahead of its time. He proposed a meeting to be held at the Cape of Good Hope in 1810. The idea was considered outlandish. But it was eventually incarnated in 1910 at the now-famous World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh.

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From the Editor: Ten Years, Thanks to You

Kevin A. Miller

Ten years ago, Dr. Ken Curtis had a crazy idea: Launch a church-history magazine.

"Nobody wants to read a magazine about church history," the experts told him. "Who would subscribe? Who would advertise? A nice idea, but it will never fly."

But here we are, ten years later. It hasn't always been easy (see interview in this issue), but we have now published 36 issues on the people, events, and movements that have shaped our Christian faith. Thanks to you, Christian History has not only survived but is thriving.

Our family of subscribers continues to grow—we're nearing 50,000 now. The vast majority of you renew your subscriptions. You introduce the magazine to others. And 93 percent of you save every issue. You have proven the experts wrong and shown that people do want to learn more about their Christian heritage. We feel deeply grateful for your support.

And the word continues to spread. Not long ago, Dwight Gibson of the Slavic Gospel Association stopped by our offices. "Christian History is a great magazine," he began, "but I had to go to Central Europe to find out about it. In Czechoslovakia, the believers showed me a copy. They were translating the issue [No. 13] on Jan Comenius. Although he's a famous Czech leader who's pictured on the 20-Kronur note of the country, people there had never known about his deep Christian faith. They'd never been told."

William Carey was perhaps the least likely candidate imaginable for the title many now bestow on him: Father of Modern Missions. He was an undereducated and poor shoemaker, sometime schoolteacher, and preacher who struggled to be ordained.

Further, Carey was born in an age when many people were utterly indifferent, even hostile, to the notion of missions. But Carey couldn't get around the Great Commission's "obligations" (as he put it) for Christians in his day. (Interestingly, Carey was profoundly influenced by the Moravians, who were featured in Christian History's premiere issue.) Through his famous ***Enquiry*** and his 40 years of dogged service in India, Carey motivated the English-speaking world to do something.

As thousands imitated Carey, the 1800s became a Great Missions Century that reshaped modern Christianity. It may be, as historian Bruce Shelley ponders, that "missionaries from the neo-pagan nations of Europe and North America succeeded in giving Christianity a stake in the future by carrying the gospel to Africa and Latin America."

In one sense, the Christian church is God-established and eternal. In another sense, Christianity is always one generation from extinction. The faith has survived for 2,000 years because one person has gone to tell another. And for Christianity to continue even fifty more years, we will need to be like William Carey, forget how undereducated and underfunded we are, face our daunting obstacles, and go.

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The Man Who Wouldn't Give Up

No matter how great the obstacles, William Carey expected great things and attempted great things.

Mark Galli

It was inconceivable that a poor, English cobbler would spend his Sunday this way. But it was not untypical of William Carey's first year in India.

"In the morning and afternoon addressed my family," he wrote in his diary in May 1794, "and in the evening began my work of publishing the Word of God to the heathen. Though imperfect in the knowledge of the language [Bengali], yet, with the help of moonshi [a translator], I conversed with two Brahmans in the presence of about two hundred people, about the things of God. I had been to see a temple, in which were the images of Dukkinroy, the god of the woods, riding on a tiger; Sheetulla, goddess of the small pox, without a head, riding on a horse without a head; Puchanon, with large ears .... I therefore discoursed with them upon ... the folly and wickedness of idolatry, the nature and attributes of God, and the way of salvation by Christ.... I cannot tell what effect it may have, as I may never see them again."

That Carey was in India at all was preposterous, and even more, that he survived and flourished there for more than forty years. Then again, William Carey expected great things and he attempted nothing less.

Unexceptional Beginnings

William Carey was born on August 17, 1761, in the obscure village of Paulerspury, a rural community of 800 inhabitants, buried in the middle of England, about as far from ocean vistas as one could get. It wasn't any closer to cosmopolitan London.

Furthermore, Carey's family was unexceptional. His father taught basic reading to children of the lowest classes. He supplemented his income as parish clerk (who helped say the Church of England liturgy, keep the church accounts, and launder clerical garb). In sum: Carey and his four siblings lived a poor and simple life.

So it's difficult to know what in Carey's boyhood sparked his far-flung imagination.

Yet that imagination roamed unchecked. He talked so much of Columbus, his boyhood friends nicknamed him after the adventurer. His uncle Peter, a soldier who served in Canada, told him tales of ships and seas, of American Indians and other wonders of the New World.

Still, it seemed he would live out his days in rural England. When Carey was 7, he developed several allergies and a skin disease so that his skin became painfully sensitive when exposed long to the sun. Thus, his parents sought a trade for him in which he could work indoors. Eventually, Clarke Nichols, a shoemaker in the nearby town of Piddington, took teenage Carey as an apprentice.

And it was in that small cobbling shop in that little village that Carey's fantastic vision began to take shape.

Vague Visions

In the cobbling shop, Carey met John Warr, a Congregationalist who immediately sought to convert him. Carey resisted, but within three years, his conscience convinced him of his need for a Savior and his desire to leave the "lifeless and carnal" Church of England. (See "William Carey Converts," in this issue.)

An impassioned Carey became anxious about his Anglican relatives. On visits to Paulerspury, he would ask permission to lead in family prayers. But neophyte zeal outran tact. His sister Polly later wrote, "Often have I felt my pride rise while he was engaged in prayer, at the mention of those words in Isaiah 'that all our righteousness was like filthy rags.' I did not think he thought his so, but looked on me and the family as filthy, not himself and his party."

In Clarke Nichols's workshop, Carey discovered a commentary on the New Testament, with part of the text printed in Greek. From a neighbor he borrowed a Greek grammar and glossary and soon taught himself Greek.

Carey was beginning to expect great things, however vaguely, but his place in the social scheme conspired against great attempts. He continued as an apprentice cobbler when Clarke Nichols died, transferring himself to Thomas Old of Hackleton. And he became responsible for a family, marrying Dorothy "Dolly" Plackett, who soon gave birth to daughter Ann.

His poverty increased, and disease struck. Before her second birthday, Ann died of fever. That fever also nearly took Carey, and it left him bald the rest of his life. When his mother joined the family to help nurse Carey, she discovered, to her shock, how deeply the family had sunk into poverty. Between his younger brother's meager savings and a collection taken in his home village, Carey was able to buy a decent cottage in Piddington.

When Thomas Old died, he handed over his shoemaking business (and the care of his widow and children) to 22-year-old Carey. Carey turned out to be an ineffective businessman, probably because he failed to attend to details and to confront customers who owed him money.

So he was forced to open an evening school in the village to supplement his income. But, as he himself recognized, he wasn't a good teacher. His sister Mary once wrote, "He probably had much less faculty for teaching than for acquiring [information]. And then he could never assume the carriage, nor utter the tones, nor wield the sceptre of a schoolmaster. He would frequently smile at his incompetency in these respects."

He seemed hopelessly caught in the web of bills and family responsibilities, with few if any skills to untangle himself.

All the while, the vision became clearer, and a trait Carey had shown since boyhood began to make a mark on his life: "I can plod," he wrote toward the end of his life, "I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything."

So during the drudge days in Piddington, he continued plodding through Latin and Greek. He began plodding his way to Earls Barton every other week to preach to a local meeting there. And, after hearing a particularly moving sermon by one Andrew Fuller, a local Baptist preacher, he began a slow, patient search of the Scriptures, which by the fall of 1783 convinced him to submit to baptism and throw in his lot with the Particular Baptists.

Ironically, though, the most religious event of his life that fall had nothing to do with such things. He borrowed a copy of "***Captain Cook's Voyages***", the famous sailor's journals from the South Seas. By the time he finished reading it, Carey was entranced, his imagination catapulted to distant lands and foreign peoples. "Reading Cook's voyages," he later wrote, "was the first thing that engaged my mind to think of missions."

He began expecting great things as never before.

Learning Geographical Grammar

In the fall of 1785, Carey was invited to become the preacher of a small, dying Baptist church in the town of Moulton. Though he was now relieved of taking care of Thomas Old's widow and children, his own family responsibilities increased. Three sons were born in quick succession—Felix, William, and Peter—so he couldn't shake poverty. Even his church admitted their "Beloved Pastor" continued to be "in considerable straits for want of Maintenance." He had to supplement his income by teaching, and later, when his students deserted him for another teacher, by cobbling.

Carey sought ordination, but after hearing him preach, the ordination committee balked at his lack of illustrations: "Brother Carey, you have no 'likes' in your sermon," evaluated one member of the committee. "Christ taught that the Kingdom of Heaven was ***like*** to leaven hid in meal, ***like*** to a grain of mustard.... You tell us what things are; but never, what they are like."

The dogged Carey kept at it, but he wasn't ordained for another two years. Three ministers officiated at the service: John Sutcliff, John Ryland, and Andrew Fuller—three cornerstones of the future Baptist Missionary Society.

That missionary society was already crystallizing in Carey's mind. Between his rounds of preaching, teaching, and cobbling, Carey consumed Guthrie's ***Geographical Grammar***, John Entick's ***The Present State of the British Empire***, and the international news section of the weekly ***Northampton Mercury.*** He pasted several sheets of paper together and made a world map, which he hung in his cobbler's workshop. He noted the population, the religion, and other pertinent facts of every country he traced.

His shoemaker employer, recognizing Carey's true gifts, agreed to pay him what he had been earning part-time: "I do not intend you should spoil any more of my leather, but you may proceed as fast as you can with your Latin, Greek, and Hebrew." And that Carey did, adding in a few weeks French and Dutch.

The Enthusiast

By late 1786, Carey's far-flung ideas were clarified enough that he was ready to debate them. Debate would be needed. His hyper-Calvinist colleagues, Carey felt, left human beings too passive. When a Baptist association meeting sought topics for discussion, Carey proposed his growing passion: "Whether the command given to the apostles to teach all nations was not binding on all succeeding ministers to the end of the world."

"Young man, sit down, sit down!" was the reported response of one minister. "You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me. Besides there must be another Pentecostal gift of tongues!"

The story may be apocryphal, but the sentiment was not. The rebuke moved Carey to study further and begin a book. In 1792, it was published: ***An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to use means for the Conversion of the Heathens in which the Religious State of the Different Nations of the World, the Success of Former Undertakings, and the Practicability of Further Undertakings, are Considered***. The cumbersome title, typical for the day, accurately conveyed the contents. In it he forcefully answered the objections of hyper-Calvinists and those who raised practical obstacles to missions. (See "Missions Manifesto," in this issue.)

By spring 1791, though, sentiments about missions had been shifting. At a Baptist ministers' meeting,

Carey was pleased to hear two sermons that supported his notions. He immediately proposed organizing a missionary society. The group hesitated, but they asked Carey to preach at next year's meeting.

Carey brought his book's arguments to bear in that sermon, based on Isaiah 54:2, 3—"Enlarge the place of thy tent." He concluded with an unforgettable call: "Expect great things! Attempt great things!"

The sermon was riveting, but the ministers hesitated again. As one biographer puts it, "Carey was an embarrassment to them; he had a 'bee in his bonnet' about missions."

As the group readied to adjourn, Carey gripped Andrew Fuller's arm: "Is nothing ***again*** going to be done?"

Carey's passion prevailed. Within five months, on October 2, 1792, twelve ministers formed a society "for the propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen, according to the recommendations of Carey's ***Enquiry***." They passed around Andrew Fuller's snuff box, embossed with a picture of St. Paul's conversion, and collected pledges for the mission.

Great things were expected. It was now time for the great attempt.

Never Looking Back

The young missionary society was eager to act. Almost immediately they heard that John Thomas, a Baptist and former surgeon, wanted to be sponsored as a missionary to Bengal. He had recently lived there, in the service of the East India Company, and had performed some ministry with Bengalis. He seemed too good to be true, and in their January 9, 1793 meeting, the Baptist Missionary Society agreed to sponsor him and a suitable companion, if one could be found.

Carey was asked whether he would go: "He readily answered in the affirmative," the minutes flatly state. The date of departure was a mere three months hence. Carey never looked back.

Immediately he ran into seemingly insurmountable problems. His church objected. His father called him mad. His wife, five months' pregnant, refused to go. The missions society had no funds with which to send him and Thomas. Even more problematic, the East India Company did not permit missionaries to enter Bengal.

Carey's visionary enthusiasm, Thomas's passion and rhetoric, and the support of Fuller and friends, soon overcame the obstacles. Still, his decision to leave abruptly—without securing adequate funds or training, or the willing compliance of his family—would cost him dearly for years.

After being ejected from an English ship for their illegal status, Carey and Thomas found a Danish ship. After a five-month voyage (punctuated by a violent storm), the party finally approached Calcutta. Since they had no permit to enter the country, the captain set them on a small fishing boat, and they floated into Calcutta, arriving on November 11, 1793. When Carey and Thomas stepped onto the banks of the Hooghly River, the great attempt had begun.

Disastrous Beginnings

Within days, it became clear that Thomas had grossly underestimated the cost of living in Calcutta; funds were draining rapidly. After an aborted move 30 miles north, the Careys were forced to take up residence in a marshy, malaria-ridden area outside of Calcutta, a haunt of gangs and robbers. They moved into a dilapidated house of a local moneylender because it was rent-free. Meanwhile, Thomas, with creditors on his tail, abruptly abandoned Carey to re-establish his surgery practice.

Undernourished and ill-housed, William, Dorothy, and their oldest son, Felix, battled dysentery; Felix nearly died. Dorothy and her sister Kitty (whom Dorothy had asked to accompany her to India) became restless: "My wife, and [her] sister too ... are continually exclaiming against me," Carey wrote. "They think it very hard indeed that [Thomas] should live in a city, in an affluent manner, and they be forced to go into a wilderness, and live without many of what they call the necessaries of life, bread in particular." Carey scoured the area for work, with no success.

Carey then learned of land 40 miles east that could be used rent-free for three years. Needing some start-up funds, he asked Thomas for his share of the mission's savings (which were supposed to last a year). Thomas informed him he had spent it all setting up his surgical business.

Carey was devastated. "I am in a strange land," he wrote, "alone, no Christian friend, a large family, and nothing to supply their wants." And bitter: "I blame Mr. T. for leading me into such expense." And remorseful: "And I blame myself for being so led."

Fighting Discouragement

Although unnerved, Carey continued to study Bengali and used some of his meager resources to hire a pundit, a native teacher. In a few weeks, he began preaching to small gatherings through an interpreter and began rudimentary Bible translation.

With Thomas's help, he finally borrowed some money, and on February 4, two women, an infant, three boys under 10 (with both Dorothy and Felix still seriously ill), and Carey began a three-day journey along rivers and salt lakes, heading for an untamed region in India. As a later missionary described it: "The rivers swarm with hideous alligators, which we often see basking on the shores, or rather embedded in the mud, of which the banks consist; tigers of the fiercest kind pass and repass every night over ground where the people are at work in the day; and snakes of enormous size and deadly poison abound."

The party made it, but within a month, plans changed. A friend of John Thomas offered Thomas and Carey jobs as managers of an indigo plant in Mudnabatti. The mercurial Thomas was regretting his abandonment of the mission, and Carey was convinced the economics could support a mission. The job would also make his presence in India legal. Carey prepared for another move—it would be the fifth in seven months.

The new climate, constant moving, responsibility for two women and four children, isolation from fellow believers, absence of a mission partner, and learning a new language and customs took a toll on Carey. "When I left England," he wrote, "my hope of the conversion of the heathen was very strong; but, among so many obstacles, it would entirely die away, unless upheld by God. Nothing to exercise it, but plenty to obstruct it, for now a year and nineteen days."

Discouragement mingled with faith: "Well, I have God, and his word is sure." And this: "For a long time my mouth has been shut, and my days have been beclouded with heaviness; but now I begin to be something like a traveler who has been almost beaten out in a violent storm, and who, with all his clothes about him dripping wet, sees the sky begin to clear."

Unfortunately, the skies would only get darker.

The Valley of the Shadow of Death

Almost immediately after their move to Mudnabatti, dysentery struck Dorothy again. Carey contracted malaria, doubling up in convulsions for 26 hours. Most devastating of all, in early October, 5-year-old Peter died from dysentery. Distraught William and Dorothy couldn't find anyone to carry Peter's coffin, at first—to do so would have meant an Indian would break caste.

Dorothy never recovered from the blow, and soon she began having delusions, accusing Carey of adultery, even threatening him with a knife. Her mental decline accelerated during the first three months of 1795.

Carey was overwhelmed: "This is indeed the valley of the shadow of death to me, except that my soul is much more insensible than John Bunyan's Pilgrim. Oh what would I give for a kind sympathetic friend, such as I had in England, to whom I might open my heart!"

As usual, in desperation he clung to his faith: "But I rejoice that I am here, notwithstanding; and God is here, who not only can have compassion, but is able to save to the uttermost." Years later, though, he admitted that during his first years in India his "mind was often almost dried up by discouragement and want of success." Feeling "spiritless ... I went to work like a soldier who only expects to be defeated."

In spite of all this, he plodded through his Bengali translation, even during the long, hot summer days of 1794, when he was exhausting himself establishing the indigo factory and supervising nearly 100 employees. Soon he took up the study of Sanskrit, and by the spring of 1797, a Bengali New Testament was translated and ready for printing.

He and John Thomas also set up two schools for boys, teaching Sanskrit, Persian, Bible study science, and mathematics.

Furthermore, though Carey did not yet have a single convert, he kept preaching, and by January 1795, he could preach half an hour in Bengali.

Meanwhile, though Carey had been writing home, he hadn't received one letter during his first 17 months in India, all mail being delayed because of hostilities between England and France. When he did start receiving mail, one of the first letters from the society questioned whether "the spirit of the missionary is swallowed up in the pursuits of a merchant." Carey wrote a sharp reply: "To vindicate my own spirit or conduct I am very averse, it being a constant maxim with me that, if my conduct will not vindicate itself, it is not worth vindicating."

Another setback came when John Thomas deserted him again, to engage himself in the rum business, again to stay ahead of his creditors. "Mr. Thomas is gone far away," he wrote to Fuller in January 1798, "and my domestic troubles are sometimes too heavy for me. I am distressed, yet supported, and I trust not totally dead in the things of God."

His "domestic troubles" included his four boys (in 1796, Dorothy had borne another son, Jonathan). With Dorothy mentally unstable and William consumed with his work, the boys were neglected and had become unruly. On top of that, the owner closed Carey's indigo factory, so the Careys were forced to move again, this time to Kidderpore, so that Carey could start his own indigo factory.

The clouds looked as dark as ever. In fact, they were parting—finally.

Off the Treadmill

In October 1799, eight adults and five children arrived in Calcutta to help Carey. For political and economic reasons, the group decided to locate in a Danish settlement in Serampore, near Calcutta.

In this group were William Ward, a printer, and Joshua Marshman, a teacher, who with Carey would become one of the most effective missionary teams in history.

Marshman and Ward immediately took over much of the administrative and financial duties of the mission. Marshman's wife, Hannah, gave the wild Carey boys some discipline, and Ward became their surrogate

father. Dorothy was watched by others. Carey could finally get something done, as could his colleagues.

Within months, Hannah and Joshua opened boarding schools for girls and boys, to teach a variety of subjects, including English. They were besieged with students.

In December 1800, after seven years of labor, Carey baptized his first Indian convert, Krishna Pal. In February 1801, the first Bengali New Testament came off the Serampore press. In April, Carey was appointed teacher (later professor) of Bengali and Sanskrit at Fort William College, Calcutta, a school for British civil servants. The mission thus gained prestige and much-needed government printing contracts.

A mission station was later established about 200 miles north of Calcutta—the first of 19.

With success multiplying, Carey began expecting even greater things. In 1806, he wrote to Fuller: "If we are given another fifteen years, we hope to translate and print the Bible in all the chief languages of Hindustani." That would have meant one complete Bible translation every year.

His colleagues thought him mad. William Ward argued against it, as did Andrew Fuller from England. He wondered if "by aiming at too much we may accomplish the less." But Carey disregarded the warnings and proceeded. In 1808 his Sanskrit New Testament was published, and over the next 28 years, his pundits and he would translate the entire Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, and Sanskrit, and parts of it into 29 other languages and dialects.

In the meantime translations of Indian literature and work on grammars proceeded (in Bengali, Sanskrit, Marathi, Telugu, and Kanarese).

Not satisfied with their educational efforts, Marshman and Carey founded Serampore College in 1818, a divinity school for Indians, regardless of caste or denomination.

Not all went well. A fire in 1812 destroyed a great deal of Serampore's translation work. A squabble with younger missionaries ruptured the missionary community in 1817. Mistrust between the Baptist Missionary Society and Serampore eventually led to Serampore's break with the society.

In addition, Carey suffered personal losses: he watched his first two wives die, as well as his son Felix. His close companion William Ward died early as well. Carey himself nearly succumbed to disease, but as Ward put it at the time, "Carey has just been raised from the dead, and the machine goes on a little longer."

Meanwhile "the machine," Marshman, Ward, and their extensive team of pundits, kept at it, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, so that children and young men were educated, Bible translations produced, the gospel preached—until on a June morning in 1834, Carey passed away.

Great Things Achieved

Carey expected, attempted, and achieved a great deal at Serampore. What was his greatest legacy?

Certainly his Bible translation work was prodigious: the full Bible in six languages and parts of the Bible in 29 others. This is a monumental achievement—especially since Carey was a self-educated English cobbler.

But Ward and Fuller proved right: by aiming at too much, Carey accomplished the less. Most Indian language experts (including missionary translator Henry Martyn in Carey's day) have concluded that his translations are wooden and in some places indecipherable. Carey's work had to be immediately and significantly revised.

Certainly, Carey made strides in converting Indians for Jesus Christ. But by 1821, the entire Serampore mission could claim only about 700 Indian converts, a small number compared to the teeming population.

This was a major concern of the Serampore trio all their days. They recognized that as the years went by they spent less time with Indians and more with translation work and administration of the mission and schools. Though other missions to Hindus have rarely done better, Carey's legacy is not primarily in evangelism.

Carey also wins admiration for his sheer physical stamina. The expected lifespan of an Englishman in rural India in the late 1700s was six months. Yet in spite of the humid, unsanitary conditions Carey lived in (especially during his first six years), he survived malaria, dysentery, cholera—not to mention tigers and cobras. Carey was an iron man.

William Carey's most impressive achievement, though, is his single-minded perseverance.

In England, when the vision of world evangelism was still vague and the social obstacles immense, Carey plodded relentlessly toward the vision.

In northern Bengal, poverty, disease, grief, culture shock, and loneliness racked him and his family, yet he doggedly pursued his calling.

During those first six agonizing, bitter years, Carey produced not a single convert. But in the manner of a later resolute Briton, Winston Churchill, Carey never gave up, never gave up, never, never, never gave up.

As he said, "I can plod. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything."

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William Carey Converts

How a lukewarm Anglican became a fiery Baptist

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Until age 14, William Carey later wrote, "I was addicted to swearing, lying, and unchaste conversation; which was heightened by the company of ringers, ... foot-ball players, the society of a blacksmith's shop ... and though my father laid the strictest injunctions on me to avoid such company, I always found some way to elude his care." His father was clerk of the local Church of England parish, so William was required to attend worship. But he said, "of real experimental religion, I scarcely heard anything till I was fourteen years of age." That's when he met John Warr, a fellow apprentice cobbler and a devout Dissenter. ("Dissenters" were Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Quakers who renounced certain doctrines and practices of the Church of England.)

Warr shared his books and "radical" ideas with Carey, who, even though a lukewarm Anglican, argued according to the anti-Dissenter prejudices of his day. In their shoeshop debates, Carey nearly always had the last word, though afterward he admitted to feeling "stings of conscience."

Conscience of a Cheat

Nearly two years into his apprenticeship, when he was 15, those stings became acute. As he delivered goods to various customers in the village, the local ironmonger gave him a shilling as a Christmas gift. When Carey went to buy himself a treat with it, he discovered it was counterfeit. So he exchanged it for a genuine shilling from the money his master, Clarke Nichols, had entrusted him. He would tell his master one of his customers had paid in counterfeit.

Carey later recalled, "I prayed to God to excuse my dishonesty and lying for this once, I would never repeat such an action, but would break off with sin thenceforth. My wickedness prevailed, and I told the falsehood." Nichols, though, discovered the truth. "I ... was so overwhelmed with shame that it was a considerable time before I went out," Carey admitted.

He meant he stopped attending worship services, though his new spiritual concern drove him to prayer meetings. He was gradually brought "to depend on a crucified Savior for pardon and salvation."

That decision was crystallized when Carey was 17. A national day of prayer had been called because the war with the rebellious American colonies had taken a bad turn. Carey was attending a Congregationalist worship service, and the preacher's text was Hebrews 13:13 "Let us therefore go out unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

"I think I had a desire to follow Christ," he later wrote, "but ... I concluded that the Church of England, as established by law, was the camp in which all were protected from the scandal of the cross, and that I ought to bear the reproach of Christ among dissenters." In the next four years, he would slowly fine-tune his theology, finally rejecting his infant baptism and becoming a Particular Baptist.

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A Day in the Life of William Carey

In a letter dated June 12, 1806, William Carey describes a typical day at his Serampore mission community. (His original punctuation and spelling are retained.)

I rose this day at a quarter to six, read a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and spent the time till seven in private addresses to God and then attended family prayer with the servants in Bengalee. While tea was pouring out, I read a little in Persian with a Moonshi [a native assistant or secretary] who was waiting, when I left my bed room. Read also before breakfast a portion of the Scriptures in Hindoosthanee.

> "The moment breakfast was over sat down to the translation of the Ramayuna [a classical Indian epic] from Sangskrit, with a Pundit ... continued this translation till ten o'clock, at which time I went to [Fort William] College, and attended duties there [teaching Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi] till between one and two o'clock — When I returned home I examined a proof sheet of the Bengalee translation of Jeremiah, which took till dinner time....
>
> "After dinner translated with the assistance of the chief Pundit of the College, greatest part of the 8th Chap. of Matthew, into Sangskrit—this employed me until six o'clock, after six sat down with a Tilingua Pundit ... to learn that Language. Mr. Thomas [an acquaintance] called in the evening; I began to collect a few previous thoughts into the form of a Sermon, at Seven o'clock, and preached in English at half past seven ... the Congregation was gone by nine o'clock. I then sat down to write to you, after this I conclude the Evening by reading a Chapter in the Greek testament, and commending myself to God. I have never more time in a day than this, though the exercises vary."

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The Rest of the Serampore Trio

Carey saw little success until he was joined by this team

Vinita Hampton Wright, a regular contributor to CHRISTIAN HISTORY, is co-editor of World Shapers: A Treasury of Quotes from Great Missionaries (Harold Shaw, 1991).

William Ward
(1769–1823)
Radical, and "spiritual father"

William Ward, a printer and editor, met William Carey just before Carey sailed for India. Carey invited Ward to set up a printing press there for Scripture translations, and in 1799 Ward arrived with the Marshmans and others. He later married the widow of fellow missionary John Fountain.

Ward set up the first mission press in North India. He also translated, wrote, and preached at every opportunity; some considered him Serampore's finest preacher. Two years after his arrival, he toured the interior with first convert Krishna Pal preaching and distributing Scriptures. "His knowledge of the character and habits of the natives surpassed that of either of his colleagues," wrote one observer, "and few Europeans have ever been more successful in dealing with [the natives]."

Ward had radical sympathies that twice landed him in court during his editorial days in England. He had belonged to a "questionable" political society and "embibed in democratic notions created by the French Revolution." He was acquitted both times.

In India, Ward's intellectual curiosity thrived. After several years' research he wrote ***A View of the History, Literature, and Mythology of the Hindoos***, including a minute description of their manners and customs, and translations from their principal works. He later worked with Joshua Marshman in producing Indian periodicals.

For William Carey, Ward was a godsend. Ward was 30 when he came to Serampore, and he captured the admiration of an adolescent Felix Carey, who was bound for trouble. Felix was soon working at the press, and under Ward's influence, he became a Christian. "How often he has upheld me," Felix said, "when my feet well-nigh slipped! He was my spiritual father."

Ward's health forced him to return to England in 1819. For four years he negotiated in the brewing struggle between the Serampore team and the Baptist Mission Society. He also toured England, America, and Holland to speak and raise support for the ministries in India. "The door of faith is open to the Hindoos, and who shall shut it?" he proclaimed. "The chain of caste is broken, and who shall mend it?"

Sixteen months after his return to the mission, Ward died of cholera. His own hymn describes the rewards of the Serampore work, as well as the struggles:

> Yes, we are safe beneath Thy shade,
> And shall be so midst India's heat:
> What should a missionary dread,
> For devils crouch at Jesus' feet.
> There, sweetest Saviour! let Thy cross

Win many Hindoo hearts to thee;
This shall make up for every loss,
While Thou art ours eternally.

Hannah & Joshua Marshman
(1767–1847; 1768–1837)
"First woman missionary to India" and brilliant educator

Industrious Hannah Marshman became known as the "first woman missionary to India." A "mother" of the mission, she ran the large mission household and cared for many: mentally ill Dorothy Carey; the widow and children of William Grant (who had died less than three weeks after arriving in India); and the young and pregnant widow of John Fountain. With William Ward, she disciplined the unruly Carey boys.

Hannah felt burdened for Indian women, who, in her words, did little more than "boil their rice and bathe their children." Around 1800 she established and began operating a school for young women. It became a model in India. By 1926, in fact, there were 14 other such institutions in the country.

As a young man, Joshua Marshman had been placed on a lengthy probation pending his admission to a church. His offense: he had too much "head knowledge" of religion. He was esteemed by Carey and Ward as the most astute scholar among them.

In Bristol, England, Joshua had been principal of a charity school. In India he and Hannah operated two boarding schools for English children and one non-fee school for Indian children. The schools' income, in fact, helped make the Serampore mission financially independent.

In addition to running the schools, Joshua joined in translating and preaching. He was a sharp-tongued speaker, and often he came home bloodied from bricks thrown by Indians who were irritated by both his manner and his message. Carey once contrasted his personality and Marshman's by saying, "In point of zeal, he is Luther, I am Erasmus."

Joshua became in Serampore what Andrew Fuller was in London—the campaigner, debater, and fund raiser (so much of a fund raiser that he was impersonated at government balls).

In the local government he ran interference for mission interests, writing letters and making visits, including one to the Danish king.

In 1818 Joshua launched "***Friend of India***," the first Bengali periodical. As he said, "If ever the Gospel stands in India, it must be by native opposed to native, demonstrating its excellence above all other systems."

Joshua Marshman worked for 15 years in his spare time to produce the first, though soon surpassed, Chinese translation of the Bible (and added a Chinese grammar). Some have wondered why: Serampore was more than 600 miles from China.

The Marshmans were attacked by the mission's supporters for living lavishly on mission funds. In truth, the Marshmans' home was better furnished because of the extensive entertaining they did in connection with the schools—an arrangement accepted by the Serampore team. But the Marshmans were deeply wounded by the accusations.

Joshua Marshman outlived both Ward and Carey. In his final months, he was depressed and mentally distressed. He died before news could reach him that the mission was about to be broken up; it

officially ceased the day after his burial.

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The Missions Manifesto

An excerpt from "the Magna Carta of the Protestant mission movement

William Carey

In 1792, with a subsidy from a friend, William Carey published the now-famous An Enquiry Into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens. ***Many Christians of Carey's day believed that "when God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me." Carey argued instead that Christ's command to "Go into all the world" was still binding and required action now.***

As our blessed Lord has required us to pray that his kingdom may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven, it becomes us not only to express our desires of that event by words, but to use every lawful method to spread the knowledge of his name.

In order that the subject may be taken into more serious consideration, I shall (1) enquire, whether the commission given by our Lord to his disciples be not still binding on us, (2) take a short view of former undertakings, (3) give some account of the present state of the world, (4) consider the practicability of doing something more than is done, and (5) the duty of Christians in general in this matter.

What Happened to the Great Commission?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, a little before his departure, commissioned his apostles to "Go," and "teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19); or, as another evangelist expresses it, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country to the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception, or limitation. They accordingly went forth in obedience to the command, and the power of God evidently wrought with them.

Many attempts of the same kind have been made since their day, and which have been attended with various success; but the work has not been taken up, or prosecuted of late years (except by a few individuals) with that zeal and perseverance with which the primitive Christians went about it. It seems as if many thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them. It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of their fellow sinners, who to this day, are lost in ignorance and idolatry.

For Apostles Only?

There seems also to be an opinion existing in the minds of some, that because the apostles were extraordinary officers and have no proper successors, and because many things which were right for them to do would be unwarrantable for us, therefore it may not be immediately binding on us to execute the commission, though it was so upon them.

To the consideration of such persons I would offer the following observations.

First, if the command of Christ to teach all nations be restricted to the apostles, or those under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, then that of baptizing should be so too; and every denomination of Christians, except the Quakers, do wrong in baptizing with water at all.

Secondly, if the command of Christ to teach all nations be confined to the apostles, then all such ordinary ministers who have endeavored to carry the gospel to the heathens, have acted without a warrant, and run before they were sent.

Thirdly, if the command of Christ to teach all nations extend only to the apostles, then, doubtless, the promise of the divine presence in this world must be so limited; but this is worded in such a manner as expressly precludes such an idea. "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20).

Wait for Providence?

It has been said that we ought not to force our way, but to wait for the openings, and leadings of Providence; but it might with equal propriety be answered in this case, neither ought we to neglect embracing those openings in Providence which daily present themselves to us. What openings of Providence do we wait for? Where a command exists nothing can be necessary to render it binding but a removal of those obstacles which render obedience impossible, and these are removed already.

It has been said that some learned divines have proved from Scripture that the time is not yet come that the heathen should be converted; and that first the "witnesses" must be slain (Rev. 11:1–13), and many other prophecies fulfilled. But admitting this to be the case (which I much doubt) then it must be as bad to pray for them, as to preach to them; or else that none shall be converted in the heathen world till the universal down-pouring of the Spirit in the last days. But this objection comes too late; for the success of the gospel has been very considerable in many places already.

Too Dangerous?

[Carey reviews "Undertakings for the Conversion of the Heathen" from Pentecost to his own day. He then estimates that there are 731,000,000 people on earth, and of these, 420,000,000 are "pagans" and an additional 130,000,000 are "Mahometans."]

The impediments in the way of carrying the gospel among the heathen must arise, I think, from one or other of the following things: either their distance from us, their barbarous and savage manner of living, the danger of being killed by them, the difficulty of procuring the necessities of life, or the unintelligibleness of their languages.

First, men can now sail with as much certainty through the Great South Sea as they can through the Mediterranean or any lesser sea. Yea, and Providence seems in a manner to invite us to the trial, as there are to our knowledge trading companies whose commerce lies in many of the places where these barbarians dwell.

Secondly, as to their uncivilized and barbarous way of living, this can be no objection to any except those whose love of ease renders them unwilling to expose themselves to inconveniences for the good of others.

It was no objection to the apostles and their successors, who went among the barbarous Germans and Gauls, and still more barbarous Britons!

Thirdly, in respect to the danger of being killed by them, it is true that whoever goes must put his life in his hand, but Eliot, Brainerd, and the Moravian missionaries have been very seldom molested. Nay, in general the heathen have showed a willingness to hear the word; and have principally expressed their

hatred of Christianity on account of the vices of nominal Christians.

Fourthly, as to the difficulty of procuring the necessities of life, this would not be so great as may appear at first sight; for though we could not procure European food, yet we might procure such as the natives of those countries which we visit subsist upon themselves.

Fifthly, as to learning their languages, it is well known to require no very extraordinary talents to learn, in the space of a year, or two at most, the language of any people upon earth, so much of it, at least, as to be able to convey any sentiments we wish to their understandings.

How to Pay for It?

In respect to contributions for defraying the expenses, money will doubtless be wanting; and suppose the rich were to use in this important undertaking a portion of that wealth over which God has made them stewards, perhaps there are few ways that would turn to a better account at last. Nor ought it to be confined to the rich; if persons of more moderate circumstances were to devote a portion, suppose a tenth, of their annual increase to the Lord, there would not only be enough to support the ministry of the gospel at home, but to defray the expenses of carrying the gospel into the heathen world.

Many persons have of late left off the use of West India sugar on account of the iniquitous manner [slavery] in which it is obtained. This [resultant savings] would abundantly suffice.

What a "treasure," what a "harvest" must wait such characters as Paul, and Eliot, and Brainerd, and others, who have given themselves wholly to the work of the Lord. What a heaven will it be to see the many myriads of poor heathens, of Britons among the rest, who by their labours have been brought to the knowledge of God. Surely a "crown of rejoicing" (1 Thess. 2:19) like this is worth aspiring to. Surely it is worth while to lay ourselves out with all our might in promoting the cause and kingdom of Christ.

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Christian History
Issue 36: William Carey: 19th c. Missionary to India

Why Did the 1800s Explode with Missions?

At the time of William Carey, there were probably only a few hundred Protestant missionaries in the world. They never numbered more than a few thousand during the following decades. By 1900, even after a second burst of Protestant missions, there were only 15,000 European and American Protestant missionaries throughout the world. Those who went had short careers; many died within the first two years on the field. Thus the numbers remained quite small.

But the magnitude of the modern missions movement must not be measured by the number of missionaries. It must be measured by the growth of the church.

In 1800, perhaps 1 percent of Protestant Christians lived in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. By 1900, this number had grown to 10 percent. Today, at least 67 percent of all active Protestant Christians live in countries once considered foreign mission fields. And the church is still growing rapidly, even explosively, in many areas—Korea, sub-Saharan Africa, Singapore, and the Peoples' Republic of China.

Consider this remarkable turnaround. Only 200 years ago, Protestant Christianity was almost exclusively Western. Now Protestants are strongest in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. From a Christian standpoint, the modern missionary movement has turned the world upside down.

What caused this movement? Why did it start?

Powerful Pietists

The first European Protestant missionaries to Asia landed in India almost a century before Carey. Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau were Pietists from the University of Halle (in Germany) who went to the Danish colony of Tranquebar in India in 1706. More than fifty Pietist missionaries from Germany followed them to India during that century.

Pietism also influenced the young Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who became the leader of the Moravian movement. In 1732 the Moravian believers began to send missionaries all over the world—to 28 different countries in 28 years.

Susannah Wesley, mother of John and Charles Wesley, was greatly influenced by reading the memoirs of Ziegenbalg and Plutschau. Her sons deeply felt the spiritual impact of the Moravians, and their Methodist movement birthed many missionaries in the 1800s.

Astounding Awakenings

Evangelical revivals in the 1700s were a second major factor in the explosion of missionary activity. Jonathan Edwards, a leader of the first Great Awakening in North America, had a deep concern for missions. He encouraged concerts of prayer, which were organized in Scotland and North America. Perhaps most important, he published the journal of David Brainerd, who died after a brief but intense ministry with native Americans in central New Jersey. Carey later was inspired by Brainerd's journal.

The evangelical awakening in England was led primarily by John and Charles Wesley and George

Whitefield. The movement led to renewal in various churches, and Carey was awakened in his faith by the movement. It is significant that Carey wrote his ***Enquiry*** missions manifesto only one year after John Wesley died.

Colonial Commerce

The political and commercial context was a third factor. During the 1500s and 1600s, missions from Europe were carried on almost exclusively by Roman Catholics. The mission efforts were supported by the major Roman Catholic maritime powers—Spain, Portugal, and later France.

But by the early 1600s, the British East India Company was trading in India. Great Britain gradually began to control land there, and a century later nearly all of India was incorporated into the British Empire. England, with its growing commercial interests, had become the dominant maritime power of the world. News of Captain Cook's explorations in the South Pacific came back to England, expanding peoples' understanding of the world. When Carey read ***The Last Voyage of Captain Cook***, it stirred his interest in missions.

Successive Societies

Thus, Carey arrived on the scene at a time of commercial and political expansion and religious revival. He insisted the Great Commission was binding on the church. He traced the historical roots of Protestant missions. And he recognized the changing historical context that made a missionary movement possible.

Carey's call to mission launched a movement. More than any other individual, he moved European and North American churches to focus on the world beyond. For this reason he deserves to be called the Father of Protestant Missions.

In 1792, Carey sparked the creation of the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen. There soon followed an explosion of mission agencies: London Missionary Society (1795), Scottish and Glasgow Missionary Societies (1796), Church Missionary Society (1799), Religious Tract Society (1799), and the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804).

Similar groups formed in continental Europe and America, including the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810) and, among Baptists, the General Convention for Foreign Missions (1814).

Carey Continued

The missionary movement has not stopped growing since 1792. There are now approximately 40,000 career Protestant missionaries who have gone from the United States to other parts of the world. Ten percent are from older "mainline" churches; 90 percent come from newer evangelical or charismatic groups.

However, the missionary movement launched by Carey has changed radically. In the 1800s, with rare exceptions, cross-cultural missionaries came from the West. Even until forty years ago ***missionary*** generally meant a Westerner going to Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Today, though, the number of cross-cultural missionaries is growing most rapidly among believers ***from*** Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Research indicates there were 3,400 such missionaries in 1972. Today, there are at least 48,000.

This is a new phenomenon in history. No message has been communicated so widely by so many people

of so many races, languages, and cultures as the Christian message today.

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William Carey: A Gallery of Missionary Pioneers

They boldly went where no Christian had gone before

Elizabeth Cody Newenhuyse is an author and editor from Wheaton, Illinois.

Adoniram Judson (1788–1850)
Ann Hasseltine Judson (1789–1826)
America's unlikely missionaries to the Far East

He had been a cynical actor who rejected the faith of his father. She had been the town belle, indulged by her parents.

Hardly likely candidates for the rigors of the early nineteenth-century mission field—but now Ann Hasseltine Judson, nicknamed Nancy, and her husband, Adoniram Judson, are assured of their place in history. They helped open the Far East to others who would carry out the Great Commission.

Before they met and were married, both Adoniram and Nancy underwent powerful conversion experiences, passing, as Nancy put it, "from death into life." Both had a passion to join the nascent missionary enterprise that was firing the imaginations of youthful Christians on both sides of the Atlantic. So thirteen days after they wed, in 1812, they set sail for India.

Aboard ship, Adoniram, an ordained Congregational minister, changed his theology to the Baptist position. Ann did also, and they were thus forced to sever ties with their sending mission. The Judsons were baptized by William Carey's colleague William Ward.

The Judsons found that the English governors of the subcontinent did not welcome these Western visitors with their Bibles and zeal. Threatened with deportation, they left India and went first to Mauritius and thence to Burma—a closed land, ruled by a tyrannical regime, horribly hot and disease-ridden. The Judsons found the place "dark, cheerless, and unpromising."

Over time, Ann Judson suffered from smallpox and spinal meningitis, buried one child, and saw her husband shut up in a vermin-infested prison for two years. Yet she also translated the Gospel of Matthew into Burmese and strove to improve the lot of Burmese women, who were considered little more than chattel. She missed her family but could affirm that "I am happy in thinking that I gave up this source of pleasure … [and] I am happy [to] labor for the promotion of the kingdom of heaven." She, and a new baby, died soon after Adoniram's release.

Adoniram fell into a deep depression after Ann's death and even contemplated suicide. But he recovered and went on to translate the entire Bible into Burmese. He also pursued an itinerant ministry that, after many years, began to yield fruit. In 1845 he returned to the U.S. for a visit, to find himself lionized as a living Protestant saint.

Judson, who was married three times, outlived all his wives and several of his children. Between marriages, he entrusted his children's care to others. Some of his children never saw him after childhood. But when he died in 1850, he left behind 7,000 more "children"—members of the Burmese Christian church he and Ann had begun.

Hudson Taylor

(1832–1905)
He "became Chinese"

"To go forth, to cry out, to warn, to save others, these were frightful urgencies upon the soul already saved." Author Pearl Buck, the daughter of missionaries, might have been describing Hudson Taylor's vision when she wrote these words. Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, had a single-minded dream to win to Christ every man, woman, and child in China.

He grew up in Yorkshire, England. As early as age 4 he was telling people he wanted to be a missionary to China. Following a rebellious period, at 17 he committed himself to Christ; at 18 he began training in medicine. During this time word reached England that the new emperor of China was a professing Christian. A door had been opened, and Taylor, sponsored by the Chinese Evangelization Society, left for Shanghai's missionary colony in 1853.

He didn't stay there long. He disliked the other missionaries and wished to get away from their "criticizing, backbiting, and sarcastic remarks," and so he began traveling into the interior, a vast territory long hostile to foreigners. Taylor decided that if he would "become Chinese," his ministry would have more impact. So he dyed his hair black and donned a false pigtail, Chinese spectacles, and baggy pantaloons .

The China Inland Mission (CIM) came into being in 1865 while Taylor and his wife, Maria (a missionary teacher he'd met and married in China in 1858), were on furlough in England. He toured the country recruiting missionaries with his message of "a million a month dying without God."

Now the work was in place. But quarreling among the workers, continued hostility from the Chinese, and criticism from the British dogged Taylor for years. And some of his problems were brought on by his brusque manner. Further, Taylor's vision of exposing all of China to the gospel—as opposed to working with nationals to build a local church—made CIM vulnerable to the Chinese suspicion of "foreign devils." In 1900, following an imperial decree that all foreigners be killed and Christianity exterminated, 135 missionaries and 53 missionary children were massacred.

Taylor, ill in Switzerland at the time, never fully recovered from the tragedy. He died in 1905. His example rallied hundreds to serve under CIM (now Overseas Missionary Fellowship), and the organization set the pattern for future faith missions worldwide.

David Livingstone
(1813–1873)
Seeker of "1,000 villages where no missionary has been"

The popular image of David Livingstone is that of a bearded, eccentric old man being "found" in darkest Africa by intrepid New York reporter Henry Stanley (who is remembered as saying, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?").

Livingstone, according to his biographers, ***was*** eccentric, or at least difficult. He ***was*** found by Stanley. But he also laid the foundations for generations of missionaries who sought to reach Africa with the gospel.

Livingstone was born in Scotland. His countryman, missionary Robert Moffat, inspired him with stories of "the vast plain to the north" of Kuruman, in southern Africa, where he had seen "the smoke of a thousand villages, where no missionary had ever been." It was to Kuruman, where the Moffats were based, that Livingstone trekked in 1841. He immediately fell in love with Africa; he also fell in love with the Moffats' oldest daughter, Mary. They were married in 1845.

Livingstone's zeal for exploration was at least as strong as his zeal for evangelization. He and Mary (and,

later, their children) would set off on frequent expeditions into the wilderness, earning him the rebuke of his mother-in-law: "A pregnant woman with three little children trailing about with a company of the other sex—through the wilds of Africa among savage men and beasts! [The] thing is preposterous."

Livingstone finally sent his family home to England—unfortunately to live in poverty. Some believed his wife began drinking. Meanwhile he began his greatest journey, across the continent along the Zambezi River. Hostile tribes and fever were constant threats, but Livingstone and tribesmen reached the coast in six months. Then they turned back and did it again.

In his travels Livingstone encountered the brutal slave trade. He was convinced that a combination of "Christianity and commerce" would bring prosperity to the region and thereby end the evils of slavery.

Returning to England in 1856, Livingstone was hailed as a national hero. He made two more expeditions; neither was as successful as the first. The last time he went to Africa, in search of the source of the Nile (he didn't find it), he stayed seven years. He suffered from malnutrition and fever.

After Henry Stanley found him, the two men became friends. Stanley later said of him, "For months after we met I found myself listening to him, wondering at the old man carrying out the words, 'Leave all and follow Me.' But little by little, seeing his piety, his gentleness, his zeal, his earnestness ... I was converted by him, although he had not tried to do it."

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY
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William Carey: The Christian History Timeline

Mark Galli is associate editor of Christian History.

William Carey

1761-1792, Cobbler and Pastor in England

1761 ***Aug. 17***, Carey born at Paulserspury, Northamptonshire

1773 Teaches himself Latin

1775 Becomes apprentice shoemaker; religious talks with John Warr

1776 ***Dec.***, conscience stricken over stolen shilling, begins serious spiritual search

1779 ***Feb.***, leaves Church of England; ***Sept.***, apprentices with Thomas Old

1781 Marries Dorothy "Dolly" Plackett

1782 ***June***, begins preaching every other week; daughter Ann born

1783 ***Oct.***,baptized by John Ryland, Jr.; daughter Ann dies; seriously ill and loses hair; ***Dec.***, when Thomas Old dies, takes over business and cares for Old's family

1785 Son Felix born; ***summer***, fails trial sermon for ordination; ***Aug.***, begins pastoring in Moulton on trial basis; reads ***Captain Cook's Journals*** and begins thinking about missions

1787 ***Aug.***, ordained; ***Oct.***, baptizes his wife, Dorothy

1788 Son William, Jr., born

1789 Begins pastorate at Baptist church in Harvey Lane, Leicester; son Peter born

1791 Daughter Lucy born?

1792 ***May 12***, publishes ***An Enquiry*** on missions; ***May 31***, preaches "Expect great things, attempt great things" sermon; ***Oct. 2***, helps to found Baptist Missionary Society (BMS); daughter Lucy dies

1793-1834, Missionary and Professor in India

1793 ***Jan. 9***, commissioned as missionary to Bengal; ***May?*** son Jabez born; ***June 13***, sails from Dover with family; ***Nov. 11***, arrives in India

1794 ***Feb.***, settles in Sundarbans jungle; ***June***, moves to Mudnabatti to manage indigo factory; ***Oct.***,

son Peter dies; suffers attack of malaria

1795 ***Mar.***, Dorothy slips into delusions

1796 Son Jonathan born

1797 Completes draft of Bengali New Testament

1799 ***Summer***, moves to Kidderpore; ***Oct.***, William Ward, Joshua and Hannah Marshman, and others arrive

1800 ***Jan.***, moves to Serampore, helps organize missionary community ; ***Dec.***, baptizes son Felix and first Indian convert, Krishna Pal

1801 ***Feb.***, first Bengali NT printed by Serampore Press; ***Apr.***, appointed teacher at Fort William College, Calcutta

1804 First of 19 mission stations established

1807 Ordains son Felix; granted doctorate by Brown University; ***Dec.***, Dorothy dies

1808 ***May***, marries Charlotte Rumohr; Sanskrit NT published

1812 Fire at Serampore destroys years of translation work

1815 Andrew Fuller, last of BMS founders, dies; tensions increase between BMS and Serampore mission

1817 Younger missionaries leave Serampore to form rival mission

1818 Serampore College founded; Sanskrit Bible published

1820 Organizes Agricultural Society of Bengal

1821 ***May***, Charlotte dies

1822 ***Summer***, marries Grace Hughes; son Felix dies

1823 William Ward dies

1827 Serampore severs ties with BMS

1830 Calcutta bank crash; Serampore in financial jeopardy; Serampore reunites with BMS

1834 ***June 9***, Carey dies at Serampore

1837 Joshua Marshman dies; Serampore mission closed

Christianity & Missions

1761-1792, Cobbler and Pastor in England

1769 Junípero Serra founds mission at San Diego

1770 Evangelist George Whitefield dies

1771 Francis Asbury brings Methodism to America

1779 "Amazing Grace" published

1784 New "Sunday school " movement enrolls 250,000 children

1791 John Wesley dies

1793-1834, Missionary and Professor in India

1795 London Missionary Society (LMS) founded

1796 Scottish and Glasgow missionary societies founded

1797 America's 2nd Great Awakening begins in Kentucky

1799 Church Missionary Society (CMS) founded in England

1804 British and Foreign Bible Society founded

1807 British slave trade abolished

1810 First American foreign missions group, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

1813 Adoniram and Ann Judson arrive in Burma

1816 Richard Allen elected bishop of African Methodist Episcopal Church

1817 Robert Moffat arrives in South Africa, begins 50 years of work; John Williams, famous South Seas missionary, sent

1820 American missionaries arrive in Hawaii

1825 Charles Finney ignites revival in New York

World Events

1761-1792, Cobbler and Pastor in England

1769 James Watt patents steam engine

1776 Declaration of Independence

1778 James Cook discovers Hawaii; Voltaire dies

1780 Benedict Arnold's plot

1781 Kant's ***Critique of Pure Reason***; planet Uranus discovered; British surrender at Yorktown

1783 Montgolfier brothers' hot-air balloon

1784 Benjamin Franklin invents bifocals

1785 Mozart's ***Marriage of Figaro***

1789 French Revolution begins; Washington begins 1st term

1791 U.S. Bill of Rights

1793-1834, Missionary and Professor in India

1793 Eli Whitney invents cotton gin

1796 Edward Jenner improves vaccination against smallpox

1800 Washington, D.C. replaces New York as U.S. capital

1812 Napoleon invades Russia; U.S. declares war on Britain; Grimm's ***Fairy Tales***

1818 Mary Shelley's ***Frankenstein***

1819 Beethoven goes deaf; five years later writes 9th Symphony ("Ode to Joy")

1820 U.S. Land Law fixes land price at minimum of $1.25 per acre

1826 ***The Last of the Mohicans***

1834 Spanish Inquisition abolished; Abraham Lincoln elected to Illinois legislature

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 36: William Carey: 19th c. Missionary to India

William Carey's India

Christianity Before Carey

• **Malabar Christians:** claim their church was founded by the apostle Thomas. Christianity certainly present in India by 300s.

• **Catholics:** Francis Xavier does Jesuit mission work in 1540s; later, in Madura, missionaries win 150,000 converts by 1700.

• **Pietist Lutherans:** establish mission in 1706; by Carey's time the Lutheran community numbers perhaps 20–40,000.

• **Dutch Reformed:** 342,000 believers on Ceylon by 1800.

Key Sites in Carey's Mission Work

• **Calcutta:** Lands in this bustling city in November 1793; soon runs low on funds and moves 30 miles north to Bandel; within weeks moves back to a malaria-ridden marsh northeast of Calcutta for a few more weeks; in 1801, begins teaching in Fort William College here.

• **Sundarbans:** In 1794, lives for three months in this huge area of jungle, swamps, and rivers, to cultivate some rent-free land; begins building bamboo hut.

• **Mudnabatti:** Also in 1794, moves to this town 250 miles north, near Malda, to manage indigo factory for five years.

• **Bhutan:** In 1797 makes brief trip here, possibly to investigate establishing a missions base.

• **Malda:** Preaches occasionally in small English congregations here in mid-1790s.

• **Kidderpore:** Moves here in 1799 when floods force his indigo factory in Mudnabatti to close.

• **Serampore:** Fellow missionaries arrive from England to join Carey, but are not permitted to live in British India. By early 1800, they and Carey are settled in this Danish colony and establish a mission and printing press.

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Christian History
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William Carey's Less-than-Perfect Family Life

The model missionary did not have a model home

Dr. Ruth A. Tucker, a member of Christian History's editorial advisory board, is the author of numerous books, including From Jersusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions (Academie, 1983).

William Carey, the "Father of Modern Missions," is revered by mission enthusiasts from every denomination and mission society. He stands as a model for generations to come—but not in his family life.

Carey's performance in the arena of family life has most marred his image—and not just in the twentieth century when family issues have assumed a high priority. In Carey's own day, people questioned his seeming insensitivity to family concerns.

But questions about Carey's judgment in family matters were muted by the spirit of the times. It was an age when by law a wife and children were essentially a man's property. Eighteenth-century jurist Sir William Blackstone summarized the marital legal code of his day by quipping, "The husband and wife are one, and the husband is that one." So it was with William Carey and his first wife, Dorothy—or Dolly, as she was affectionately called.

It was William's decision, and his decision alone, to leave everything behind for a lifelong commitment to India. Dolly's resistance was natural for a mother of three little ones, expecting the fourth. Nevertheless, she is the one who has suffered at the hands of biographers. Wrote George Smith: "Never had a minister, missionary, or scholar a less sympathetic mate, due largely to ... latent mental disease." Furthermore, "she remain[ed] to the last a peasant woman, with a reproachful tongue."

Finding Little in Common

William was still a teenager—not quite 20 in the summer of 1781 when he married Dorothy. She was nearly six years his senior. There is no indication theirs was a love-match, but the marriage lasted until her death 26 years later.

William and Dorothy had little in common. She was illiterate at the time of their marriage; she signed an X in the parish marriage register. Carey might have waited and married a woman whose capabilities and interests more closely paralleled his own, but he did not.

It would be mistaken, however, to imagine that Dorothy had shrewdly snared the hometown's most eligible bachelor. He was described as a "poor journeyman-shoemaker," and during the dozen years before he sailed for India, he was never able to bring his family above the poverty level When his mother visited them at the time of their baby daughter's death, she was appalled by their abject poverty.

But despite the Careys' financial hardships, there is no evidence Dorothy was dissatisfied with her marriage or circumstances in life. William's pastoral duties at a tiny Baptist church consumed precious time and energy with inadequate compensation. Yet she supported him to the point of consenting to be rebaptized as a Baptist—a noteworthy decision considering her devout Puritan upbringing.

Refusing to Go to India

But Dorothy's support for her husband's ministry had its limits. When he announced he had volunteered to become a missionary in India, she adamantly refused to be part of the venture. There is no evidence William had previously shared his dreams with Dorothy. And his decision came suddenly—not at home with Dorothy at his side, but at a Baptist Missionary Society meeting in a neighboring town.

William reluctantly acquiesced to her refusal to join him, but he did insist on taking their oldest child, Felix.

Why did Dorothy oppose serving with her husband as a foreign missionary? Critics have charged not only a lack of wifely submission, but also spiritual impotence. But considering the departure was immediate, the cross-cultural move was permanent, and the venture was woefully underfunded, it is not difficult to understand her frame of mind.

Even if they endured the long sea voyage, would they survive the disease-ridden tropical climate of India? She had endured many hardships, but this was asking too much, especially to say good-bye to family and friends with no hope of seeing them again. She was described as a "homebird" who was "home-clinging to a degree. Her people, as the registers prove, had for a century at least kept close to one another, sharing all their sunshines and griefs within the bounds of the village." She must have hoped her husband would change his mind, but he did not.

Caving in to Pressure

On April 4, 1793, William Carey abandoned his pregnant wife and two little children and boarded the Oxford on the Thames to begin his voyage to India. He was accompanied by his son Felix and his missionary partner, John Thomas, as well as Mrs. Thomas and their daughter. The voyage ended almost as quickly as it began, however, when Thomas was forced to return and settle debts before leaving.

The delay gave William as well as John Thomas additional time to urge Dorothy, who had just come through a safe delivery, to change her mind. Carey utilized kind words and subtle implications in his effort to persuade her. "If I had all the world I would freely give it all to have you and my dear children with me," he wrote while on board the Oxford. "But the sense of duty is so strong as to overpower all other considerations; I could not turn back without guilt on my soul.... You want to know what Mrs. Thomas thinks, and how she likes the voyage. She would rather stay in England than go to India; but thinks it right to go with her husband."

Thomas was not so subtle. He told Dorothy her refusal to join the venture would cause her family to "be dispersed and divided for ever—she would repent it as long as she lived."

Dorothy reluctantly caved in and agreed to go, provided her sister would accompany her. But she was unhappy, and in the years that followed, her unhappiness turned into bitter resentment. Poverty, illness, and loneliness took its toll—hardships compounded by the fact the Thomas family was living in relative affluence in Calcutta. William complained in a letter that Dorothy and her sister were "continually exclaiming against" him.

Suffering from Delusions

The family situation worsened for Dorothy when her sister left the household to marry an official of the East India Company Then in 1794, soon after the Careys moved from the Sundarbans jungle to Mudnabatti, 5-year-old Peter died of dysentery. For Dorothy, the grief, combined with her physical ailments, pushed her over the brink of despair. Her mental condition worsened—though not enough to preclude marital intimacy, since in January 1796, Dorothy gave birth to another son. Three months after the birth, William wrote: "My poor wife must be considered as insane, and is the occasion of great sorrow." Another missionary described her as "wholly insane."

Dorothy suffered from delusions, particularly that her husband was having affairs with other women. But she was not entirely out of touch with reality. At times she was coherent enough to convince others of the charges, though women who believed Dorothy were quick to discredit her when they became the targets of her accusations. Sometimes she would follow her husband into the streets berating him; other times she was seen attacking him physically; and still other times she talked and acted rationally.

But as the years passed, her condition worsened to the point that Carey confined her in a locked room. He worked on his translations, according to an observer, "while an insane wife, frequently wrought up to a state of most distressing excitement, was in the next room."

Taming Unruly Children

During these years, the Carey boys had to fend for themselves. Their father was consumed by his work and was not inclined to discipline them for misbehavior. "The good man saw and lamented the evil," wrote his colleague Hannah Marshman, "but was too mild to apply an effectual remedy. "

Hannah sought to provide a motherly influence, and William Ward, another colleague, served as a surrogate father. According to a missionary on the scene, "From being a tiger, he [Felix] was transformed into a lamb under Ward's influence." At age 16 Felix began preaching to the native people, and six years later, in 1807, his father ordained him and commissioned him to serve as a missionary in Burma.

Later that same year Carey made the following entry in his diary: "Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1807. This evening Mrs. Carey died of the fever under which she has languished some time. Her death was a very easy one; but there was no appearance of returning reason, nor any thing that could cast a dawn of hope or light on her state."

Finding Happiness

On May 9, 1808, just five months and a day after Dorothy's death, Carey married Charlotte Rumohr, a Danish woman not connected with the mission. He had known her since she had moved to India several years earlier, and she had become a baptized believer through his ministry. She was described as petite, elegant, well-educated, cultured, and wealthy—a stark contrast from Dorothy.

William and Charlotte were both 46, and in many ways she was a perfect match for Carey. But their marriage created no small scandal in the mission. So agitated were some missionaries when they learned of William's intent to remarry so soon, they circulated a petition to dissuade him. Carey's determination prevailed, however, and they withdrew their protest.

Fortunately for Carey, this marriage was happy. He and Charlotte worked together on translations, and she became a loving mother to the younger boys, who had never lived in a functional family. When she died in 1821, after 13 years of marriage, Carey wrote: "We had as great a share of happiness as ever was enjoyed by mortals."

Two years after Charlotte's death, Carey, now 62, married for the third time. The bride was Grace Hughes, a widow 17 years younger. Grace was no match for Charlotte in intelligence or culture, but she was a good companion for Carey's remaining 11 years. "Her constant and unremitting care and excellent nursing took off much of the weight of my illness," he wrote, adding, "we live in great happiness."

But it was Charlotte who had truly captured William Carey's heart. When he died in 1834, his will specified that Grace should receive his valuable library, but that he be "buried by the side of my second wife, Charlotte Emilia Carey."

Building a Communal Family

Carey’s home involved more than the nuclear family. After he located in the Danish settlement of Serampore in 1800, Carey formulated a pattern for communal family living. All missionaries and their family members would share meals and devotional times and live out of a common treasury. The purpose was to bring family life and ministry together in order to enhance both. Earlier Carey had written, “Our families should be considered nurseries for the Mission.”

For Carey, as well as the other Serampore missionaries, that ideal became a reality as their children continued on in the work of the mission. Carey’s own legacy includes nephews and sons and later generations of missionary enthusiasts. His son Jabez, like Felix, started young—language study at 13 and ordination and commissioning at age 18.

But not all went according to Carey’s plans. His nephew Eustace established a rival mission station. Carey’s son Felix abandoned his missionary work in Burma in 1814 to serve as an ambassador for the king of Burma. Carey was devastated: “Felix is shriveled from a missionary into an ambassador.”

Carey’s children were important to him, but the ministry came first. This was evident when his son William, who was serving with his young wife at a remote mission outpost, was gored by a buffalo. Discouraged and fearing for his wife’s safety, William requested a transfer back to Serampore.

Carey’s words to his son exemplify his lifelong perspective on family relationships: “I ought, however, to say that I think there is much guilt in your fears. You and Mary will be a thousand times more safe in committing yourselves to God in the way of duty than in neglecting the obvious duty to take care of yourselves.”

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY
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Dorothy's Devastating Delusions

A psychologist examines the mental illness that afflicted William Carey's first wife

Dr. James R. Beck is associate professor of counseling at Denver Seminary and author of Dorothy Carey: The Tragic and Untold Story of Mrs. William Carey (Baker, 1992).

William and Dorothy Carey and their four sons arrived in Calcutta on November 11, 1793. They soon exhausted their funds and found themselves dependent on others for food and shelter. In the next seven months, they moved five times.

Dorothy struggled with bleeding brought on by tropical diseases. Then the family sustained a cruel blow on October 11, 1794, when their 5-year-old son Peter died. The painful weeks after his death passed slowly, but at Christmas the family made a brief holiday trip to Malda. William wrote in his last journal entry for the year that they were all much refreshed by the trip.

But no one could have predicted what was going to happen in the next three months. At some point before March 1795, Dorothy slipped across the subjective border between sanity and insanity. She was to remain locked in the grip of psychosis for the remaining twelve years of her life.

Murderous Jealousy

The first acknowledgment of a problem comes from a letter Carey wrote to his sisters in England on October 5, 1795. "I have greater affliction than any of these in my family. Known to my friends here, but I have never mentioned it to anyone in England before, is my poor wife, who is looked upon as insane to a great degree here by both native and Europeans.... I have been for some time past in danger of losing my life. Jealousy is the great evil that haunts her mind."

The second major piece of evidence comes from a letter that Carey's colleague, John Thomas, wrote to Andrew Fuller on January 11, 1796. Apparently, Carey and Thomas had planned to wait a number of months before informing the society in England of Dorothy's poor mental state. Perhaps they hoped her delusions would disappear.

When her condition did not improve, Thomas wrote a detailed description of Dorothy's plight. "Mrs. C [arey] has taken it into her head that C[arey] is a great whoremonger; and her jealousy burns like fire unquenchable." Thomas added that Dorothy became obsessed with Carey's supposed unfaithfulness and would follow him every time he left the house. "[She] declares in the most solemn manner that she has catched [sic] him with his servants, with his friends, with Mrs. Thomas, and that he is guilty every day and every night.... In all other things she talks sensibly."

Carey and Thomas both wondered if Dorothy could be demon-possessed. After reading a psychiatric textbook, they concluded she suffered from mental illness. Today we would diagnose Dorothy's condition as a Delusional Disorder (formerly paranoia), Jealous Type. The prognosis for intense delusional conditions is poor today, just as it proved to be for Dorothy 200 years ago. She never improved.

Life soon took on a frantic tone. Thomas wrote, "She has uttered the most blasphemous and bitter imprecations against him, when Mrs. Thomas and myself were present, seizing him by the hair of his

head, and one time at the breakfast table held up a knife and said, ***Curse you. I could cut your throat.*** She has even made some attempt on his life."

Plaintive Outpourings

Knowing the nature of Dorothy's mental illness sheds light on a remarkable section in Carey's journal. During the first three months of Dorothy's retreat from reality (January-March 1795), Carey poured out his soul:

January 1–15: "This time I have had bitters (of a family kind) mingled with my soul."

February 3: "This is indeed the Valley of the Shadow of Death to me.... O what would I give for a kind sympathetic friend such as I had in England to whom I might open my heart."

February 5: "O what a load is a barren heart."

February 7: "O that this day could be consigned to oblivion."

February 17: "O that I had but the spirit to pray for myself."

March 9–10: "Much to complain of, such another dead soul I think scarcely exists in the world."

No doubt some of these plaintive outpourings refer to Dorothy's deteriorating mental condition. William's efforts to reason with Dorothy were proving futile. The best strategy he and Thomas could design was to confine her, probably in a locked room. During the next 12 years, Dorothy would enjoy only some brief times of liberty.

Life for all of the Careys was difficult. Carey especially worried about his sons in his October 5, 1795, letter to his sisters: "Bless God all the dirt which she throws is such as cannot stick; but it is the ruin of my children to hear such continual accusations."

Unremitting Psychosis

What caused Dorothy to slip into her unremitting psychosis? We can only speculate.

• Her weakened physical health and the stress of adjusting to new foods, customs, and weather.

• Loss dogged Dorothy's steps. She had buried two daughters in England and had lost contact with her extended family. (The first mail to arrive in Bengal from friends and family did not arrive until several weeks after Dorothy slipped into her psychotic state.) Her sister Kitty, who had accompanied her to India, married and left Dorothy in mid-1794. And she buried her son Peter in October 1794.

• By temperament, she was a fearful person. Perhaps the loss of Peter triggered the fear she might lose her remaining three sons to tropical diseases.

• She may have lost trust in William's ability to care for her. Dorothy clearly had told William she did not want to come to India. Only under great pressure did she change her mind. The trust she had placed in Carey when she decided to accompany him to India may have evaporated soon after their arrival. In its place surged a flood of distrust, this time regarding William's sexual faithfulness.

Fascinating Questions

Dorothy's paranoia poses fascinating questions.

How did William accomplish all that he did with constant domestic turmoil?

Did Carey ever seek medical help for Dorothy? William may have hesitated having doctors from the British East India Company learn about Dorothy's accusations. Surely an official investigation would have ensued, and the presence of missionaries in India may have been further jeopardized.

How did Dorothy function as a mother during these years? She did give birth to their seventh child, a son named Jonathan, approximately 11 months after paranoia began.

How did the family move 250 miles from Mudnabatti to Serampore during the first ten days of 1800?

We are left with more questions than answers.

Dorothy died on December 8, 1807, at the age of 51. The public learned of her death by reading a brief, telescoped notice in the 1808 ***Periodical Accounts***: "Mrs. Carey, after having been ill about a fortnight, died."

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY
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William Carey: A Gallery of Carey's Companions and Converts

Key people in his life

Vinita Hampton Wright, a regular contributor to CHRISTIAN HISTORY, is co-editor of World Shapers: A Treasury of Quotes from Great Missionaries (Harold Shaw, 1991).

Felix Carey
(1785–1822)
Young missionary and prodigal son

At age 8 Felix Carey went to India as a companion to his missionary father. He picked up Bengali even faster than his father did.

With his father absorbed in mission work, though, Felix was neglected. He became characterized by, as Hannah Marshman put it, "obstinacy and self-will." With the arrival of William Ward (who became his "spiritual father") and Hannah to India, he got hold of himself. He and William Ward and Krishna Pal (William Carey's first Indian convert) had many discussions, which eventually led to the baptism of him and Pal on the same day.

Young Felix, along with Joshua Marshman and two Indians of upper caste, once carried the coffin of a lowcaste believer—a monumental act that initiated the breakdown of the caste system among believers in that area.

In 1807, at age 21, Felix was sent as a missionary to Rangoon [Burma], but mission life proved costly. His wife died within a year, and seven years later, he lost his second wife and his children in a boating accident.

Having noticed Felix Carey's linguistic and medical gifts (he had introduced smallpox vaccination to Burma), the king of Burma offered Felix an ambassadorship to the governor-general in Calcutta. The weary Felix accepted, resigning from mission activities in 1814. His disappointed father commented: "Felix is shrivelled from a missionary into an ambassador."

Felix lived in fine ambassadorial style in Calcutta (with "a red umbrella with an ivory top, gold betel box, gold lefeek cup, and a sword of state," he wrote), soon overspending and drinking heavily. He was recalled to Burma in disgrace. Felix then disappeared across the border into Assam, where he wandered for three years.

Missionary William Ward persuaded him to return to the Serampore mission. There Felix worked on the mission newspapers, contributed major translation work, and wrote a treatise in Bengali on anatomy and physiology. Cholera struck him down at age 37, during the same few months that it took Krishna Pal and William Ward.

Krishna Chandra Pal
(d. 1822)
Carey's first Indian convert

Krishna Chandra Pal lived a life of "firsts." He worked near Serampore as a carpenter and heard of Jesus while working for some Moravians there. By the time he met Carey and the other Serampore

missionaries, he had broken from formal Hinduism into a sect that embraced the theism and egalitarianism of Islam.

One day, while going to the river to bathe, Krishna slipped and dislocated his shoulder. He sent his children to the mission house, where he knew the medical doctor, John Thomas, was staying. As Thomas took care of the shoulder, he spoke with Krishna about the healing of his soul and gave him a tract in Bengali.

After that, Krishna called frequently at the mission. William Ward and Felix Carey read and discussed Scripture together. Soon Krishna told Thomas, "I am a great sinner, but I have confessed my sin and I am free!"

"Then I call you brother," Dr. Thomas said. "Come and let us eat together in love." This caused a great stir among the Indian servants, for by eating with Europeans, Krishna had broken caste.

Despite being mobbed and called "traitor!" by fellow Indians, Krishna was baptized. He was the first native convert in seven years of missionary labor and prayer.

Krishna's wife and sister also made commitments to Christ, as did his four daughters; a neighbor, Gokul, and his wife; and a neighbor widow. They formed the first indigenous Christian community in that area, and not surprisingly, the group experienced spiritual growing pains: feuds, jealousies, and instances of immorality.

Eventually, Krishna Pal went on preaching tours with the missionaries. He was the first native missionary to Calcutta. There he preached at a dozen or more locations weekly and visited numerous homes to evangelize both poor families and servants of the rich. He was the first writer of Christian hymns in the Bengali language.

John Thomas
(d. 1801)
Eccentric doctor

John Thomas was actually the first official appointee of the Baptist Missionary Society; William Carey was then chosen to accompany him.

A medical doctor formerly employed by the East India Company, Thomas had already engaged in missions, studied Bengali, and translated a portion of the New Testament. Thomas's recklessness in matters of finance, however, had ended that missionary stint.

Back in India with Carey, Thomas's mismanaging of the finances put him and Carey in certain ruin. He had to set up a medical practice in order to repay creditors who had hounded him all the way from England. From medicine Thomas moved into indigo manufacturing, taking Carey with him, and soon they were able to finance the mission work they had come for. Then, in 1797, Thomas quit the mission altogether to resume medicine, and later he entered the "sugar trade," probably a euphemism for rum distilling.

Through his many shifts and enterprises, John Thomas maintained a heart for evangelism. He brought the first native convert, Krishna Chandra Pal, into the mission family. On the day of Krishna's baptism, though, he suffered an episode of mental illness and had to be confined in the mission schoolhouse. Later, he stayed in a Calcutta asylum for a time. Biographer George Smith claims that Thomas's "eccentric impulses and oft-darkened spirit were due to mania." Thomas may have been, in today's terminology, manic-depressive.

Whatever his affliction, Thomas had spurred the new mission society at Kettering to go through with its missionary vision. And his missionary service, fervent if sporadic, spanned fifteen years.

Andrew Fuller
(1754–1815)
Carey's strongest home supporter

Andrew Fuller has been called "the greatest original theologian among eighteenth-century Baptists." Influenced by the writings of Jonathan Edwards, he revived evangelical Calvinism, expounded in his well-known "***The Gospel worthy of all Acceptance***" (1785).

At a time when many believed evangelizing the heathen was reserved for the original apostles, Fuller believed differently; his views were derided as "Fullerism." He heard Carey preach and told him, "We must know more of each other."

The men did become friends, and in 1792 Fuller joined Carey, Samuel Pearce, John Ryland, John Sutcliff, and others to form the The Particular Baptist Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Heathen. He served as the organization's secretary until his death. Fuller and the rest promised to "hold the ropes" while Carey went down into the spiritual mine of India.

Fuller was the "life and soul of the cause at home," traveling throughout England and Scotland to raise funds for the mission work in India. He also campaigned for Parliament to legalize missionary work in the British Indian territories. And he kept the peace between the missionaries in Serampore and their sponsors back home.

Fuller wrote many letters to Carey, Marshman, and Ward in India sometimes exhorting or rebuking them. For example, when the trio decided to translate and print Hinduism's sacred Vedas (so that missionaries could better understand the religion), Fuller thought the idea was "obscene." Yet when Fuller died, no person in England understood the Serampore missionaries and their task as well.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY
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The 11 Commandments of Missions

Carey and his team set forth principles that still guide us today

Here are excerpts from the "Form of Agreement" drafted by Carey and his colleagues in October 1805.

The Redeemer, in planting us in this heathen nation, rather than in any other, has imposed upon us the cultivation of peculiar qualifications. Upon these points we think it right to fix our serious and abiding attention.

First. In order to be prepared for our great and solemn work, it is absolutely necessary that we set an infinite value upon immortal souls; that we often endeavour to affect our minds with the dreadful loss sustained by an unconverted soul launched into eternity.

Secondly. It is very important that we should gain all the information we can of the snares and delusions in which these heathens are held. By this means we shall be able to converse with them in an intelligible manner.

Thirdly. It is necessary, in our intercourse with the Hindoos, that, as far as we are able, we abstain from those things which would increase their prejudices against the Gospel. Those parts of English manners which are most offensive to them should be kept out of sight as much as possible. [For example,] we should avoid every degree of cruelty to animals.

Fourthly. It becomes us to watch all opportunities of doing good. We are apt to relax in these active exertions, especially in a warm climate; but we shall do well always to fix it in our minds, that life is short, that all around us are perishing, and that we incur a dreadful woe if we proclaim not the glad tidings of salvation.

Fifthly. In preaching to the heathen, we must keep to the example of Paul, and make the great subject of our preaching, Christ the Crucified. It is a well-know fact that the most successful missionaries in the world at the present day make the atonement of Christ their theme.

Sixthly. It is absolutely necessary that the natives should have an entire confidence in us, and feel quite at home in our company. To gain this confidence we must on all occasions be willing to hear their complaints; we must give them kindest advice.

Seventhly. Another important part of our work is to build up, and watch over, the souls that may be gathered. A real missionary becomes in a sense a father to his people.

Eighthly. It is only by means of native preachers that we can hope for the universal spread of the Gospel throughout this immense continent. We think it our duty, as soon as possible, to advise the native brethren who may be formed into separate churches, to choose their pastors and deacons from their own countrymen.

Ninthly. It becomes us also to labor with all our might in forwarding translations of the sacred Scriptures in the languages of Hindoostan. The establishment of native free schools is also an object highly important to the future conquests of the Gospel.

Tenthly. That which, as a means is to fit us for the discharge of these laborious and unutterably important labours, is the being instant in prayer, and the cultivation of personal religion. Let each one of us lay it upon his heart that we will seek to be fervent in spirit, wrestling with God, till He famish these idols and cause the heathen to experience the blessedness that is in Christ.

Finally. Let us give ourselves up unreservedly to this glorious cause. Let us never think that our time, our gifts, our strength, our families, or even the clothes we wear, are our own. To keep these ideas alive in our minds, we resolve that this Agreement shall be read publicly, at every station, at our three annual meetings, viz., on the first Lord's day in January, in May, and October.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY
Issue 36: William Carey: 19th c. Missionary to India

Ministry in the Killing Fields

Infanticide, widow burning, assisted suicide—Carey and other missionaries battled these accepted religious practices

Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar is lecturer in theology and ethics at Serampore College, the institution founded by William Carey, in West Bengal, India.

William Carey and fellow missionary John Thomas were riding near Malda, India, in 1794 when they saw "a basket hung in a tree, in which an infant had been exposed; the skull remained, the rest having been devoured by ants." This "holy" act of infanticide had been committed with religious fervor by a Hindu mother.

Infanticide was not uncommon in India in Carey's day. But the British government in India ignored such sacrifice of infants—it didn't want to interfere in religious matters of the people. The Indian masses were ready to sacrifice their lives (and their infants') for the sake of salvation and to escape the karma-samsara cycle. The people were intensely religious and were following (though sometimes misinterpreting) written religious laws.

William Carey strongly protested these crimes against humanity. He was one of many who prodded the apparently passive government to halt or regulate a variety of harmful social practices.

Killing Infants

In 1802 Carey's colleague William Ward studied infanticide on the river island of Saugor. Many women made vows to the Holy Ganges River "that if blessed with two children, one would be presented to the River." As many as 100 children, he estimated (though probably more), were being sacrificed every year.

William Carey, Jr., reported one such sacrifice to his father: A boatman pulled a drowning child into his boat. He presented the infant to its mother. She took the child, broke its neck, and cast it into the river again!

After joining Fort William College as a professor, Carey protested infanticide to Governor-General Wellesley. Wellesley called for a study of the frequency, nature, and causes of infanticide in Bengal. So Carey prepared an exhaustive report; other people were at work as well. Since the attention of the government was now drawn, and Lord Wellesley was convinced, infanticide was abolished in 1802 before Carey even presented his report.

In a letter to John Ryland six years later, Carey explained his contribution: "I have, since I have been here ... presented three petitions or representations to Government for the purpose of having the burning of women and other modes of murder abolished, and ... in the case of infanticide and voluntary drowning in the river ... laws were made to prevent these, which have been successful."

This marked the first time the British government interfered so directly with religious practice in India. It set the stage for abolition of other practices.

Burning Widows

As scholar E. Daniel Potts explains, widow burning was "based on the religious belief that only by burning could the widow win eternal happiness and bring blessings on her family." (***Sati***, or ***suttee***, refers to the ***act*** of burning alive a widow on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband; it also names the ***woman*** who performs the act.) Voices had been raised against sati for centuries, but no one before Carey had the ability to drown out the voices that encouraged sati.

Carey first witnessed the rite, to his horror, in 1799. (***See Burning a Woman to Death in this issue.***) The next year, when he saw a group of people assembled for sati, he tried to stop them by (falsely) saying the governor-general had threatened to hang the first man who kindled the funeral pyre!

Carey and other missionaries soon launched a strong protest against sati, saying it was not voluntary but forced. Carey was then asked to submit full information on sati to the governor-general's council.

In 1803, Carey arranged for a debate of sati at Fort William College. Two years later the governor-general asked the Indian Supreme Court to study how much the practice was based on Hindu law. The report said that sati had a religious sanction, and therefore, any reform would be unwise.

But in 1816, Carey's former pundit (native teacher), who was now chief pundit of the Supreme Court, determined that sati had no basis in the Hindu Shastras [Hindu sacred writings]. Still sati was debated. Carey's colleague William Ward and Indian leader Raja Ram Mohan Roy helped influence Parliament to take up the matter in 1821.

Meanwhile, the Baptist missionaries continued their fight. They fired an Indian helper who participated in the sati of his sister-in-law. They continued to write against sati in the periodicals ***Samachar Darpan*** and the ***Friend of India***, criticizing the government for inaction.

In 1828, William Bentinck was appointed governor-general. Bentinck, an active Christian influenced by the steady sati debate, had the "stern and unalterable determination ... that this atrocious rite should cease absolutely and immediately." He consulted with Indian leaders and abolished sati in December 1829, which the Serampore missionaries praised as a "bold and decisive step."

William Carey was the government's translator into Bengali, and on Sunday morning, December 6, 1829, he received the official declaration that sati had been abolished. He decided that translating the declaration was more important than preparing his sermon. Giving the preaching task to another, Carey raced to translate the declaration by that evening, believing lives hung in the balance every minute he delayed.

Exposing the Sick

The sick and dying often were taken to the banks of the holy rivers and allowed to die. William Ward described such "ghat murders": "When a person is on the point of death, his relations carry him on his bed, or on a litter, to the Ganges.... A person, in his last agonies, is dragged from his bed and friends, and carried in the coldest or the hottest weather, from whatever distance, to the river side, where he lies, if a poor man, in the open air, day and night, till he expires." In some cases, the practice veiled simple murder.

William Carey protested against the act in 1802, and later the Serampore journal ***Friend of India*** declared that controlling the practice would require "delicate handling, for the strongest religious feelings of the Hindoos" were involved. Yet it was time to halt "barbarous cruelty even in the well meaning." Till a formal abolition took place, the missionaries occasionally carried home people who were exposed to die and nursed them back to health.

In ***India's Cries to British Humanity***, Baptist James Peggs brought to the fore the passivity of the government to this "murder." The Baptist missionaries continuously published against the social evil as well. Finally an otherwise insensitive government was forced to halt such exposures of the sick and dying.

Drowning Lepers

Lepers were rejected by their families and society and sometimes either aided in committing suicide or outright murdered. Carey saw a leper in Katwa in 1812:

"A pit about ten cubits in depth was dug, and a fire placed at the bottom of it. The poor man rolled himself and struggled for that purpose [of getting out of the pit]. His mother and sister, however thrust him in again; and thus a young man, who to all appearances might have survived several years, was cruelly burned to death.

"I find that the practice is not uncommon in these parts. Taught that a violent end purifies the body and ensures transmigration into a healthy new existence, while natural death by disease results in four successive births and a fifth as a leper again, the leper like the even more wretched widow, has always courted suicide." Others who suffered from what Carey called the "great sickness" were drowned.

The missionaries once again used their vital tool, ***Friend of India***, to make known the lepers' pathetic state and call for better care. In addition, Carey and Thomas provided medicine, as well as preaching, for many lepers. Missionary wife Ann Grant wrote in 1803, "This morning 34 poor people met before our door ... Many with the Leprosy; some with the ends of their fingers, some with their toes eaten off, by the Leprosy, many of them receive two-pence a week. Bro. Carey gives them medicine for their bodies, &the best medicine for their poor souls."

Protesting Boldly

Carey and his colleagues also objected to slavery ("In some parts of India," William Ward wrote, "children are as much an article of sale as goats or poultry"). They also spoke out against religious practices involving self-torture and published against the caste system.

One can debate who deserves credit for abolishing the evil practices of infanticide, sati, the slave trade, or the exposure of the sick and the dying. Writers have ascribed the honor to Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Lord Bentinck, and others, as well as Carey.

But Carey definitely raised his voice in protest, and he succeeded in drawing, and keeping, the attention of the government through the publications ***Friend of India*** and ***Samachar Darpan***. He and his fellow missionaries stood with the oppressed, reflecting the type of God he believed in—the Friend of India.

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Burning a Woman to Death

In Carey's day, some Hindus believed that when a man died, his widow should be burned with him. This was the only way the widow could win "eternal happiness."

In 1799, Carey first encountered the practice:

> "As I was returning from Calcutta I saw ... a number of people assembled on the river-side. I asked them what they were met for, and they told me to burn the body of a dead man. I inquired if his wife would die with him; they answered Yes, and pointed to the woman. She was standing by the pile, which was made of large billets of wood, about 2 1/2 feet high, 4 feet long, and 2 wide, on the top of which lay the dead body of her husband. Her nearest relation stood by her, and near her was a small basket of sweetmeats called Thioy.
>
> "I asked them if this was the woman's choice, or if she were brought to it by any improper influence? They answered that it was perfectly voluntary. I talked till reasoning was of no use, and then began to exclaim with all my might against what they were doing, telling them that it was a shocking murder. They told me it was a great act of holiness, and added in a very surly manner, that if I did not like to see it I might go further off, and desired me to go. I told them that I would not go, that I was determined to stay and see the murder, and that I should certainly bear witness of it at the tribunal of God.
>
> "I exhorted the woman not to throw away her life, to fear nothing, for no evil would follow her refusal to burn. But she in the most calm manner mounted the pile, and danced on it with her hands extended, as if in the utmost tranquility of spirit. Previous to her mounting the pile, the relation whose office it was to set fire to the pile, led her six times round it.... As she went round she scattered the sweetmeats above mentioned among the people, who picked it up and ate it as a very holy thing.
>
> "This being ended, ... she lay down by the corpse, and put one arm under its neck and the other over it, when a quantity of dry cocoa-leaves and other substances were heaped over them to a considerable height, and then Ghee, or melted preserved butter, poured on the top. Two bamboos were then put over them and held fast down, and the fire put to the pile, which immediately blazed very fiercely, owing to the dry and combustible materials of which it was composed.
>
> "No sooner was the fire kindled than all the people set up a great shout—Hurree-Bol, Hurree-Bol, which is a common shout of joy, and an invocation of Hurree, the wife of Hur or Seeb. It was impossible to have heard the woman had she groaned, or even cried aloud, on account of the mad noise of the people, and it was impossible for her to stir or struggle on account of the bamboos which were held down on her like the levers of a press.
>
> "We made much objection to their using these bamboos, and insisted that it was using force to prevent the woman from getting up when the fire burned her. But they declared that it was only done to keep the pile from falling down. We could not bear to see more, but left them, exclaiming loudly against the murder, and full of horror at what we had seen."

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The Lasting Contributions of a Wretched Worm

Was Carey right when he said, "I have done little for God"?

Dr. Timothy George is the founding dean of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. He is a member of CHRISTIAN HISTORY's advisory board and author of Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey (New Hope, 1991).

Inscribed on Carey's Tomb is his simple epitaph—"A wretched, poor, and helpless worm, On Thy kind arms I fall."

Long before his death at age 73, Carey had become a famous, even mythic, figure. Some of his acquaintances in England began collecting relics from his youth and early life: a cup from which he had drunk, a pair of shoes he had made, a wooden board advertising his cobbler business.

Carey would have none of it: "The less said about me the better," he declared . And when he lay dying in 1834, he summoned fellow missionary Alexander Duff to his side and whispered, "Mr. Duff! You have been speaking about Dr. Carey, Dr. Carey; when I am gone, say nothing about Dr. Carey. Speak about Dr. Carey's Savior."

In spite of Carey's protestations, Christians have continued to be interested not only in Carey's Savior, but also in Carey. More than 50 biographies of Carey have been published, representing many languages. Universities, mission societies, and publishing houses have been named for him.

Missionary Milestones

I believe Carey bears comparison with St. Francis or Martin Luther, persons of great faith who witnessed the death throes of one age and the birth pangs of another.

In particular, Carey and the Serampore Mission were catalysts for the Great Missions Century. Many of their initiatives have been imitated by missionaries since.

Systematic evangelization. Carey's ***Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*** offered a concrete plan for world evangelization. Furthermore, he laid the foundations for the modern science of missiology with his comprehensive survey of the world (cataloging each country's landmass, population, and religion). Carey's ***Enquiry*** was a forerunner to the ***World Christian Encyclopedia*** and other indispensable modern resources for missions research.

Cultural sensitivity. Carey was a pioneer in cross-cultural communication. His willingness to translate the Bible into the vernacular and to translate Hindu writings into English showed remarkable respect for Indian culture. In addition, he established indigenous churches, trained native pastors, and cultivated "Bible women" to work among female hearers.

Education. Carey's plan to evangelize India had three parts: preach the gospel, translate the Bible, and establish schools. This three-pronged strategy rose from Carey's confidence in the Reformation principle of ***sola Scriptura*** [Scripture alone].

While the mission schools taught a wide range of subjects, Bible instruction was an integral part of the curriculum. By 1817 the Serampore missionaries had opened 103 schools with an average combined

attendance of 6,703.

The crowning work of Carey's educational career was Serampore College, which he co-founded in 1818. He knew English missionaries would never be able to evangelize the whole of India. Thus Serampore was founded to provide not only liberal arts, but also theological education, to Indians regardless of denomination or caste.

Social reform. Carey never lost sight of the individual, but he believed the Christian message also applied to sinful social structures. While still in England, Carey vigorously opposed slavery. In India, he urged legislation to curb the inhumane practices of infanticide and sati, the ritual burning of widows. He detested the wanton destruction wrought by war and prayed for peace among the nations of the world.

Also, Carey and his colleagues became doctors, teachers, botanists, translators, printers, and agriculturists. Even non-evangelistic activities such as these, Carey believed, could be "means for the conversion of the heathens."

Bible translation. Carey and his associates translated the Bible into some 48 languages and dialects of India and the East. Carey himself was responsible for translating the entire Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Hindi, Assamese, and Sanskrit, as well as portions of it into 29 other tongues. There is little doubt Carey belongs in the front ranks of Bible translators in Christian history, alongside Jerome, Wycliffe, Luther, Tyndale, and Erasmus.

By translating the Bible into the vernacular, Carey provided a potent weapon to new converts and missionary recruits. Like Wycliffe's "poor priests," the Lollards, who in the 1300s and 1400s carried snippets of the Scriptures into every comer of England, so Carey's evangels moved among the rice fields and villages of northern India, leaving behind religious tracts and portions of God's Word.

Little Accomplished?

Each year on his birthday Carey took stock of his life. In 1819 he wrote to his son Jabez, "I am this day 58, but how little I have done for God." In 1831 he declared, "I am this day 70 years old, a monument of Divine mercy and goodness, though on a review of my life I find much, very much, for which I ought to be humbled in the dust."

A modern historian, sympathetic to Carey, has asked, "How are we to reconcile his intense self-distrust with his great achievements?"

First, we would grossly misunderstand Carey if we attributed to him a false modesty or a lack of proper self-esteem. Those who knew him best, including some who differed with him most, testified that his life was marked by childlike simplicity and utter transparency.

In addition, few persons in the history of the Christian faith have had a more profound sense of the grace of God. "If ever I get to heaven," he said, "it must be owing to divine grace from first to last." Carey's courage in the face of incredible difficulties and personal shortcomings was grounded in his unswerving confidence in the sovereignty of God.

The words of his friend John Newton, written some five years before Carey's departure for India, make sense of this apparent paradox:

"When God has a work to accomplish and his time is come, however inadequate and weak that means he employs may seem to a carnal eye, the success is infallibly secured: for all things serve him, and are in his hands as clay in the hands of a potter. Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and

true are thy ways, thou King of saints!”

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William Carey & Modern Missions: Recommended Resources

Christian History ***asked Dr. Brian Stanley, lecturer in church history at Trinity College in Bristol, England, to recommend the best books on William Carey. Dr. Stanley is author of*** The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries ***(Apollos, 1990).***

Biographies of Carey

• Eustace Carey, ***Memoir of William Carey, D.D.*** (London, 1836). Written by Carey's nephew soon after Carey's death.

• George Smith, ***The Life of William Carey, D.D.: Shoemaker and Missionary*** (London, 1885). An account by a later Baptist missionary at Serampore, with many quotes from Carey's letters and journals.

• S. Pearce Carey, ***William Carey, D.D., Fellow of Linnaean Society*** (London, 1923). Many consider this the standard biography.

• Timothy George, ***Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey*** (New Hope, 1991). Focuses on Carey's early years and shows Carey's Calvinistic theology.

The Serampore Trio

• E. Daniel Potts, ***British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793–1837: The History of Serampore and Its Missions*** (Cambridge, 1967). The best analysis of the work of the early Serampore mission.

• M. A. Laird, ***Missionaries and Education in Bengal,*** 1793–1837 (Clarendon, 1972). An indispensable discussion of the educational work of the mission, particularly the role of Serampore College.

• Brian Stanley, ***The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992*** (T. & T. Clark, 1992). Relates the origins of the Baptist Missionary Society and the unfortunate split between the society and Serampore.

America's First foreign Missionaries: Adoniram Judson, Luther Rice, and other students from Andover (Massachusetts) Seminary are commissioned for services in 1812. Carey led a wave of British and American missions in the 1800s.

Additional Recommendations

The editors of Christian History also recommend the following:

• Mary Drewery, ***William Carey: A Biography*** (Zondervan, 1979). Drewery brings out the personal dimension of Carey's life.

• Stephen Neill, ***A History of Christian Missions,*** 2nd ed. (Penguin, 1986). A standard.

• Kenneth Scott Latourette, ***The History of the Expansion of Christianity,*** 7 vols. (Zondervan, 1970). A thorough church history from the perspective of missions. A classic in the field.

• ***A Weaver's Son: William Carey, 1761–1834,*** a 56-minute British documentary video by the Baptist Missionary Society. (Send £20.95 to CTVC, Hillside Studios, Merry Hill Road, Bushey, Watford WD2 1DR, U. K.)

• ***William Carey,*** a 90-minute feature film covering his life and achievements, to be released in September 1993. For information, contact Gateway Films (1–800–523–0226).

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The History Behind Christian History

The experts said a church-history magazine would never work. On our 10th anniversary, we look back with founder Ken Curtis.

Christian History ***began ten years ago in the mind of Dr. A. Kenneth Curtis. Ken is president of Gateway Films, a Christian film company he founded more than twenty years ago, and chairman of its companion, Vision Video, Inc. His films have garnered more than 30 awards, including an international Emmy.***

Ken earned his Ph.D. in communications from Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, and has received an honorary doctorate from another alma mater, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Ken continues as senior editor for Christian History ***and serves on the board of Christianity Today, Inc. He also publishes Glimpses, a lively church-bulletin insert about church history. He recently became a grandfather.***

Editors Kevin Miller and Mark Galli joined Ken in his office—a converted barn in the gently rolling hills of eastern Pennsylvania—to get the story on Christian History's early days.

Christian History: Where did you get the idea to start this magazine?

Ken Curtis: Our fledging film company had just put out a film on John Hus, the Bohemian reformer. I had an opportunity to show it at a Christian Film Distributors Association meeting. As I was introducing the film, I asked, "How many of you know who John Hus was?" Out of several hundred people, about three hands went up.

I was surprised, but not nearly as much as later, when I was about to show the film to a group of pastors. Again I asked, "How many of you know who John Hus was?" Only half the group had even heard of him.

I realized that we contemporary Christians have little idea where we came from. Lay people are nearly totally unaware of our past, and ministers receive only a semester or two of church history—hardly enough to get a good grasp of the past.

So we prepared a 16-page guide to accompany the film, to give people more background. For our next film, ***First Fruits***, the story of Count Zinzendorf and the first Moravian missionaries, we upgraded the pamphlet to a magazine format. The response was heartening, so we continued by publishing issues for our films on John Wesley and John Wycliffe.

When did it become a regular magazine?

Starting with the first issue, people were saying, "How can I sign up for this?" It soon became apparent the magazine deserved a life of its own. Our issue on Ulrich Zwingli, our fourth, was the first that didn't accompany a film. At that point, we announced we would try to publish the magazine quarterly.

We wanted the magazine to introduce lay people to church history, perhaps to become a resource for adult-education classes. Mostly, we wanted to create an appetite, a hunger for knowing the history of the church.

What was the response?

It was two-sided.

On the one hand, people were discovering and loving the magazine. A man from Switzerland told me how much his seminary there appreciated the issue on Zwingli—extra copies were placed in the men's room for reading there!

On the other hand, experts in Christian publishing were telling me, "starting a magazine is more complicated than you realize. With no capital and no proven constituency, you're not going to make it."

In one sense, they were right. I had no idea how to build circulation or to find capital to roll out a direct-mail effort. Fortunately, through word of mouth and inserts in our film shipments, the magazine grew pretty quickly on its own to 10,000 subscribers.

What obstacles did you face at the beginning?

Learning how to put together a magazine was a challenge in itself—especially since I had no editorial training. I had to learn how to coordinate a hodgepodge of articles and images into a pleasing and logical flow. I had to learn proofreading and printer's jargon. I still can't remember if a comma goes inside or outside punctuation marks—it's ridiculous how many times I had to look up that kind of stuff.

So we struggled simply to get each issue organized and published on time. Sometimes that required desperate measures. We got behind on the Zwingli issue, for example, and I felt I needed a professional journalist to help us out. So I called Mark Fackler, who teaches communications at Wheaton Graduate School, and said, "Hey, Mark, I've got a couple of free tickets to the Phillies game on Thursday night. Why don't you come in Wednesday through Friday?" We worked around the clock, except for the excursion to the ballgame, and managed to meet the deadline.

Furthermore, my history background was limited, so I felt inadequate to oversee the magazine—though I felt my non-professional status would keep me in touch with the reader.

You make yourself sound like the least likely person to ever start a church-history magazine.

We certainly had to depend on on-the-job training. Sometimes we did find ourselves in predicaments. As we were finishing the issue on the Anabaptists, I had to take a film trip to Europe, so I left the last stages of the issue in the hands of others. When I returned, they handed me a proof of the cover. The only English words on the entire cover were ***Christian History***. Fortunately, at the last minute we were able to insert a small line at the top—***The Radical Reformation: The Anabaptists*** to give readers some clue as to what the issue was about.

Sometimes our editorial challenges were solved serendipitously. We needed a color image of Wycliffe for the cover, but we couldn't find the original painting—no English museum or university knew where it was. As the deadline loomed, we phoned another English art museum we'd heard about, but we misdialed and ended up reaching an English pub.

We explained what we wanted, not realizing the mix-up, and the bartender said, "I know where that picture is." It was in his town, in the Great Hall of the Manchester Town Hall.

Christian History's original elements—themes, many visuals, columns like "Did You Know"—are still proving to be the best way to organize the magazine. How did you determine the original format?

Actually, it came together within half an hour, although the ideas had been percolating for some time. By the time we sat down to construct a magazine, it fell into place: themes would help us explore issues at some depth; visuals would make history real; a bibliography would help people explore further; interesting facts at the beginning would draw people in; original writings would help people feel the era, and so on.

You keep using; the word *we*. Who is *we*?

Christian History was always a team effort. Our film staff (about five people) put in extra time. In particular, Mark Tuttle did a lot of the picture research, and Robin Heller helped solve design problems. But we didn't have a full-time person helping with the magazine until Issue 16, so various resource people pitched in, mostly on evenings and Saturdays.

Four years ago, your Christian History Institute decided to transfer the magazine to Christianity Today. Why?

It became more than we could handle. It began taking us away from our film work, and we felt we had something unique to contribute there.

We also realized the magazine had more potential than we could help it realize. We had the magazine well established, but it would take someone with more expertise to raise it to new heights.

So for some time I had prayed and kept my eyes open for possible publishers. Then at the end of an Evangelical Press Association meeting in Indianapolis, as I was leaving, I saw Harold Myra, president of Christianity Today, Inc., standing nearby.

Although I'd never met him, I knew who he was, so I walked up to him and said, "Excuse me. I've got to run to the airport in ten minutes, but would you have a couple minutes to talk?" I showed him the magazine, which he had already seen, and said, "I'd really like to find a home that would appreciate it for what it is and bring it to its potential." We took it from there, and now we're able to reach four or five times as many readers.

There was a sense of divine leading in the creation of this magazine. We needed, sought, and recognized the grace of God for each issue we published. I think it was just as much the leading and grace of God to help us realize we had done what we had been called to do, and it was time to let go and have others carry it forward.

What hopes do you have for Christian History?

I'd like it to become a flagship for a number of church-history projects. For instance, it would be great to have a church-history magazine or books aimed at children. Too many Christian young people grow up ignorant about their heritage. Then they go to a secular college and hear how the church has caused great harm in Western society. That's hardly the whole story, but when they hear that half-truth, Christian young people often go astray.

Why should people care about church history?

First, it's just plain interesting. As we were preparing the first issue, I told one of our staff, "You know, I think this may have to be an ongoing magazine—maybe a quarterly."

She responded, "But is there enough material to keep it going?" Well, there have been thirty-some issues, and we're just scratching the surface. We've had only a taste.

Second, a knowledge of history is vital for the church's life. As I said in my first editorial [in Issue 2]: "Our conviction is that the Lord of history will continue to direct and lead his people to new levels of understanding and obedience in the future as he has in the past. We believe that we are better prepared to discern his leading as we are grounded in our heritage."

I recently received a fund-raising letter from a Christian university. It implied strongly that this particular college is "the faithful strand of God's elect."

But history shows that we each are just part of a larger tapestry of God's handiwork. You study the Waldensians, and you realize the roots of the Reformation began way before 1517. You study Medieval monasticism, and you see a deep respect for the authority of the Bible long before Luther. You look at Francis of Assisi and see that concern for nature and the simple life were Christian ideas long ago.

History also shows us that some apparent failures can become great instruments of God—William Carey, for example. And some supposed successes petered out as time went on—take the early dominance of Arianism, for example.

History gives us hope that one person can make a difference. But it also gives us a humility that recognizes others have come before us to prepare the way and others will follow to further our work.

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